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# Harmony of Religions

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Vedānta Siddhānta Samarasam  
of Tāyumānavar

Thomas Manninezath  
C.M.I.

The present work is an in-depth study of Tāyumānavar, a seventeenth century poet-philosopher, mystic and saint of Tamilnadu. His profoundly philosophical hymns were the poet's creative response to the contesting creeds of his time, reflecting his own intimate religious and mystical experience of God, Śiva (*Śivānubhava*).

The present study of Vedānta Siddhānta Samarasam as God-experienced by Dr. Thomas Manninezath will no doubt, awaken a new interest in the hymns of Tāyumānavar and the legacy of religious experience they bequeath to us. Religious experience (*anubhava*), supported by reason and enriched by reflection, has to be the meeting ground for the followers of World Religions today.

It is fascinating to see how Tāyumānavar sought to bring about the harmony of two opposed traditions through a re-reading of his own tradition and a re-interpretation of the scholastic *Advaita* in favour of a more religiously inspiring popular *Advaita*.

The work illustrates how many of our contemporary concerns enshrined in such concepts as Comparative Religion, Ecumenism Religious Dialogue etc. were also a concern within the 'household' of Hinduism even as early as seventeenth century A.D. The author's interpretation of Vedānta Siddhānta Samarasam of Tāyumānavar offers a unique basis for religious tolerance and co-existence even in our present-day context of plurality of religions and creeds. That, indeed, speaks volumes for the actuality and relevance of the work.







# HARMONY OF RELIGIONS

VEDĀNTA SIDDHĀNTA SAMARASAM  
OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR

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OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR

THOMAS MANNINEZHATH, C.M.I.

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In Loving Memory Of  
My Beloved Father  
JOSEPH MANNINEZHATH



## FOREWORD

Various religious traditions and philosophical systems have claimed the allegiance of mankind, both in the East and the West, in the centuries preceeding the Christian Era and the centuries starting from it. More often than not, and most of the time, the tendency has been to oppose rival traditions and systems. Whether the mystery of life and existence is treated as a religious problem, or as a philosophical one, claims and counter-claims are made. The common endeavour has been to show not only that one's tradition or system is right, but also to deny the validity and value of other traditions or systems. However, sensitivity to the value of other systems in an incipient way is not altogether absent. The second half of the twentieth century has witnessed a change in the attitude of seekers of truth, whether in the field of religion or of philosophy. Dialogue is gradually taking the place of confrontation. The recognition of alternative standpoints in the realm of philosophy makes for a friendly approach.

In the present work, *Harmony of Religions: Vedānta Siddhānta Samarasam of Tāyumānavar*, Dr. Thomas Manninezhath offers the findings of his deep study of *Tāyumānavar*, a 17th century poet-saint of *Tamīlnādu*. Observing that etymologically 'ecumenism' is derived from the Greek word 'oikos' meaning 'household' and is used to refer to the attempt to recapture the sense of oneness among Christian Churches, he takes the word *samarasam* to be equivalent to ecumenism, as providing "a basis for intra-religious understanding and mutual acceptance within the 'household' of Hinduism, particularly between Śaiva Siddhānta and Advaita Vedānta". He contrasts scholastic Advaita and Śaiva Siddhānta with these two in the context of religious experience. The term 'Advaita' is significant as standing for 'unity-experience'. We may note that when this experience is sought to be set forth in words, perhaps it becomes almost inevitable to stress the One to the subordination or exclusion of the many or to see the many as irradiated by the One. Advaita is *kevala* (pure) or *viśiṣṭa* (qualified). Perhaps, it is wise not to revive controversies regarding the definition of terms like *pūrṇa*. Definitions are all right up to a point. But beyond that, far from clarifying,

thought and experience, they only cloud these. Let there be experience of the One or Reality, first and last.

The chapters of the book are so arranged as to start with a biographical sketch of Tāyumānavar and lead us up to *Vedānta-Siddhānta Samarasam*. The concluding chapter gives various views of *samarasam* ending with Tāyumānavar's view.

Tāyumānavar is assigned to the 17th century. He was given the name 'Tāyumānavar' because *his birth was considered as due to the grace of Tāyumānavar* which is the name of the presiding deity of Tiruchirappalli. Tāyumānavar means 'one who has become the mother also'. It was believed that Śiva, the presiding deity, took the form of a mother who was expected at the time of delivery of her daughter and who could not reach the place as a river she had to cross was in floods. Śiva's compassion made him appear as the expected mother to attend to the delivery. It is not often that persons live up to the character implied by their names. But in the present case, saint Tāyumānavar through his life and songs exemplified the compassion of the Lord and justified the name given to him. Tāyumānavar's father was employed in the service of a local chieftain. He arranged for the education of his son in Sanskrit and in Tamil. On the death of his father, Tāyumānavar was given his father's job in the court. Though, he was carrying out his official duties in a very efficient way, he was longing to meet a *guru* who would give him initiation in to spiritual life. His longing was fulfilled when he met *Mauna Guru* who belonged to the *Siddha* tradition.

The author of the present work has described in the chapter entitled *Tamiḷnadu at the time of Tāyumānavar* the political, social and *religious situation* obtaining during this period. Rivalries, controversies, intrigues etc., were not conducive to spiritual life. Tāyumānavar's own religious experience made him feel that religious harmony was not only possible but necessary. He understood philosophical and religious texts in the context of their experiential basis. Chapter three sets forth the concept of God, of bondage, of soul, and of liberation from bondage as found in the hymns of Tāyumānavar. Chapters four and five deal with *Advaita Vedānta* and *Śaiva Siddhānta*, respectively. Thus the author prepares the ground to show in chapter five *Vedānta-Siddhānta Samarasam*. He gives various meanings of the word *samarasam* as given in Sanskrit and Tamil diction-



aries. Observing that Tāyumānver uses the expression *Vedānta-Siddhānta Samarasam* in a unique way, he renders as follows. Tāyumānavar's words in one of his verses:

My action is always Thy action. The nature of myself does not exist apart from Thee. Therefore I am not different from you. This indeed is the nature of the quintessence of *Vedānta* and *Siddhānta*. (II, 5)

To Clarify Tāyumānavar's concept of oneness as *not* absorption, he quotes the following words:

When shall I attain straight that equalling state of union without distinction of one and two and that equalling state of union with the difference of one and two. (XLV:14.15)

*Samarasa Svabhāva* as an appreciative and accommodating attitude has to find practical expression in one's religious life. Tāyumānavar has brought into clear focus this attitude. In an evocative spirit, the message of the *Vedas* and early Tamil literature may be recalled and given clear expression. Let us recall the following. The oft-quoted Vedic pronouncement, "Truth is one. Sages call it by various names"; "knowledge consists in seeing the inner or real meaning of words from whomsoever one hears them" (The *Tirukkural*, couplet 423). Wisdom consists in seeing the real nature of a thing; howsoever it may appear (The *Tirukkural*, couplet 355). In a challenging way, the following is from *Tirumūlar*:

The great city is one indeed. Paths thereto are six. Even so are the six religions. Those who say "this is good", "This is bad", resemble dogs barking and rushing at a hill.

(*Tirtumantiram*, 1558)

Overawed and frightened by the size of a hill, dogs bark and rush forth to bite the hill! Likewise, confused and frightened by the diversity and surface-differences of religions, people fail to perceive their core of harmony in satisfying the basic craving of souls. It is good to recall that, this verse comes from Tirumūlar, who declares that mankind is one and God is one. Having experienced bliss, Tirumūlar desires that the whole world should share it.

What does it matter what practice is adopted? What does it

matter as to where one is born? Those with sympathy of understanding (for one another's way) can quickly reach the goal.  
(*Tirumantiram*, 1568)

Māṇikkavācakar speaks of the way of walking together to attain Divine Grace. Predisposed by Divine Grace, the *sādhaks* have to strive in concord to attain Divine Grace.

(*Tiruvācakam* XLIII)

Tirujñānasambandhar declares thus:

Wherever and as whatever born, the Lord says 'Here' and grants His Grace.  
(II, 40, 6)

Appar sings:

The Lord's feet are adorable. Their nature is to overcome the pettiness of anger of egoism (symbolized by *Muyalakan*, the prostrate figure under the feet of Nataraja). They comfort the followers of the six religions. They elevate to the true path the followers thus comforted.  
(IV, 100.7)

He gives the image of the ladder to convey the idea that the Lord provides the ladder to enable souls to rise gradually to perfection.  
(IV, 92-16)

Pattinattar's (9th century) song is remarkable in the sweep of its spirit of accommodation. After mentioning the manifestations of Śiva, as having Grace (*śakti*) as His consort, as dancing in darkness and so on, as being without form and as having form, as being *Viṣṇu* and *Brahmā*, Pattinattar goes on to say:

As having His existence affirmed and having His existence denied, as being undisturbed and as being disturbed, as Mahavira, as the Buddha—When the Lord notices that persons tend to get confused by such differing views and start quarelling, He appears to each of them in the way they have conceived Him—even as a crystal reflects the colour of whatever object is adjacent to it.

Arunagirinathar (15th century) speaks of *avirodha jñānacchudar Vāl*, the flaming sword of wisdom characterized by non-enmity. In other words, the wisdom of non-enmity destroys ignorance which is the cause of all enmity. The songs of Arunagirinathar show how he accords equal value (*samarasa*) to

Sanskrit and Tamil, to *Śiva* and Viṣṇu, to *Śiva* and *Śakti*, to *jñāna*, *bhakti* and *karma*. *Samarasa-bhāva* pervades all his songs.

A poet-saint of the last century, Ramalingam carried forward the message of *samarasa*, articulated very clearly by Tāyumānavar, to proclaim *samarasa sanmārga sangam*, an association of seekers and pursuers of truth functioning in a harmonious way. The attitude of harmony (*samarasa svabhāva*), needs to be expressed in concrete living, so as to be effective.

Dr. Thomas Manninezhath concludes his study with the following word:

The experiential realization of oneness between God and soul, and between religious traditions is a possibility more or less distinctly envisaged by religious traditions. In that sense Tāyumānavar's call is relevant even today, for in a religiously pluralistic society, the meeting of religions at the point of realization of their essence can certainly create room for a constructive and spiritually meaningful co-existence.

Dr. Thomas Manninezhath has made a careful study of the Songs of Tāyumānavar and presented his findings, ably documented and supported by appropriate excerpts. With commendable patience he has made a study of the political, social and economic conditions of the times in which Tāyumānavar lived, to show how Tāyumānavar, thanks to his unity experience, saw the need for *samarasa* not only for his time, but also for the future. I welcome the publication of this important and valuable work and wish it the widest possible circulation.

PROF. V. A. DEVSENAPATHI







## CONTENTS

FOREWORD	vii
PREFACE	xv
ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
TRANSLITERATION OF TAMIL	xix
TRANSLITERATION OF SANSKRIT	xx
CHAPTER I. A Biographical Sketch of Tāyumānavar	1
1. Date of Tāyumānavar	1
2. Early Life and Career	5
3. Meeting the Guru and Quitting the Career	8
4. Call to Asceticism	10
CHAPTER II. Tamilnadu During the Time of Tāyumānavar	17
1. Political and Social Situation	17
2. Religious Situation	21
3. Other Formative Factors	27
CHAPTER III. The Hymns of Tāyumānavar	37
1. Structure of the Hymns	37
2. Thematic Division of the Hymns	39
3. Concept of God in the Hymns	41
4. Concept of Bondage in the Hymns	52
5. Concept of Soul in the Hymns	57
6. Liberation from Bondage	61
7. Impact of His Hymns	67
CHAPTER IV. Tāyumānavar and Vedānta	75
1. General Understanding of Vedānta	75
2. Vedānta in Tamil	77
3. Tāyumānavar's Understanding of Vedānta	86
4. Vedānta as Advaita	94

CHAPTER V. Tāyumnānavar and Śaiva Siddhānta	109
1. The Vedic and the Āgamic Foundation of Siddhānta	109
2. Śaiva Siddhānta as Śaivāgamas	113
3. Śaiva Siddhānta as Śuddhādvaita	121
4. Tāyumnānavar and Śaiva Siddhānta	134
CHAPTER VI. Vedānta Siddhānta Samarasam	153
1. Diverse Views of Samarasam	153
2. Tāyumnānavar's View of Samarasam	156
CONCLUSION	169
BIBLIOGRAPHY	175
INDEX	187

## PREFACE

When Pope John Paul II visited India in 1986, a meeting of various religious leaders was held at Rajaji Hall in Madras (February 5th, 1986). At that meeting, the Pope earnestly talked about the momentous need for the meeting of religions and for a dialogue between them. He called for an encounter where religions come together in their quest for the Unknown, which transcends all comprehension. A true knowledge of the abyss surrounding the One is the goal of such religious encounter. In the soul-stirring religious poetry of Tāyumānavar, the 17th century Indian mystic, poet-saint and philosopher, we can see a similar call for experiential knowledge of the one Reality as the point of convergence of various religious traditions.

To be successful, the meeting of religions and inter-religious dialogue need a definite penetration into the depth of the original source. In other words, religions meet, where religions take their foundations. Tāyumānavar's call for religious harmony is authentic as it is an appeal to delve into that original vision of the Sacred Scripture and to dwell with the 'seers' of Truth, which alone is the basis for religious encounter. The meeting of religions is not a mere intellectual endeavour, but, a religious experience in itself. It is in this broader and deeper experiential perspective that I see the theme of Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam* in the religious poetry of Tāyumānavar.

Tāyumānavar's perception of the unity of Vedānta and Siddhānta at the point of *samarasam* is described in this work as 'ecumenical', because the state of *samarasam* provides a basis for intra-religious understanding and mutual acceptance within the 'household' of Hinduism, particularly between Śaiva Siddhānta and Advaita Vedānta. Etymologically, the term ecumenism is derived from the Greek word *oikos* meaning 'household' and the term has usually been used to refer to the theological and ecclesiological precepts and doctrines which attempt to recapture the sense of oneness among Christian Churches. The terms ecumenism and ecumenical are used here in a descriptive sense to mean the spirit of openness which potentially also provides for inclusiveness between religions.



The ecumenical theme of Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam* is here studied by way of analyzing Tāyumānavar's religious, mystical and philosophical hymns. The first two chapters are introductory. While Chapter One gives a brief biographical account of the poet-saint, Chapter Two examines the political, social and religious situation of Tamil Nadu, and other possible formative factors, which could possibly have influenced the life and thought of the poet-saint. A general analysis of his hymns is made in Chapter Three. Chapters Four and Five deal with Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta and Siddhānta. The most important point here is that his understanding of both Vedānta and Siddhānta is based on their original meaning as found in the Sacred Scriptures: the *Veda*, the *Upaniṣads*, the *Śaivāgamas* and the *Tirumurai* (mystical and canonical works of Śaiva Tradition). The way, and the process, which this understanding of both Vedānta and Siddhānta in the original sense as the personal mystical experience of the 'seers' of Truth leads Tāyumānavar to interpret these two well-known traditions in terms of unity-experience which is discussed in Chapter Six. The bringing together of Vedānta and Siddhānta at the converging point of *samarasam* has vital significance for today's religious traditions. This idea, together with other observations resulting from this research, is spelled out in the concluding section of the work.

This study was made possible through the encouragement and support I received from my Religious Congregation (Carmelites of Mary Immaculate), Kerala, India, and the Diocese of Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, and my teachers and friends. I would like to express special thanks to my supervisor Professor Krishna Sivaraman, the distinguished scholar of Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, for sharing his expertise, beliefs and insights, and for generously giving me his time and attention to help complete this work. I am very much thankful to Professor John G. Arapura for his friendly accessibility and scholarly suggestions. A special word of gratitude goes to Professors Paul Younger and Gérard Vallée for their supervisory assistance and constructive comments.

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THOMAS MANNINEZHATH, C.M.I.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Ait. Up.	<i>Aitareya Upaniṣad</i>
Bṛh. Up.	<i>Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad</i>
Ch. Up.	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>
HISI	<i>Historical Inscriptions of South India</i>
KN	<i>Kaivalya Navanītam</i>
Muṇḍ. Up.	<i>Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad</i>
PT	<i>Panniru Tirumuṟai</i>
SB	<i>Śivajñāna Bōdham</i>
SS	<i>Śinajñāna Siddhiyār</i>
Śvet. Up.	<i>Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad</i>
TM	<i>Tirumantiram</i>
TP	<i>Tāyumānaswāmikal Pāṭal</i>
TPMV	<i>Tāyumānavar Pāṭal Meykaṇṭa Vṛttiurai</i>
TVM	<i>Tiruvācakam</i>
YV	<i>Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha</i>

# TRANSLATION OF TAMIL

## VOWELS

அ	— a
ஆ	— ā
இ	— i
ஈ	— ī
உ	— u
ஊ	— ū
எ	— e
ஏ	— ē
ஐ	— ai
ஒ	— o
ஔ	— ō
ஓள	— au

## CONSONANTS

க	— k
ச	— c
ட	— t
த	— t
ப	— p
ற	— r
ர	— r
ந	— ṇ
ஞ	— ṅ
ண	— ṇ
ன	— ṇ
ற	— n
ம	— m
ய	— y
ல	— l
ள	— l
ழ	— l
வ	— v
ஃ	— k

## TRANSLITERATION OF SANSKRIT

### VOWELS

अ--a
आ--ā
इ--i
ई--ī
उ--u
ऊ--ū
ऋ--r̥
ॠ--r̄
लृ--l̥
ए--e
ऐ--ai
ओ--o
औ--au

### CONSONANTS

क्--k	प्--p
ख--kh	फ--ph
ग--g	ब--b
घ--gh	भ--bh
ङ--ñ	म्--m
च--c	य--y
छ--ch	र--r
ज--j	ल--l
झ--jh	व--v
ञ--ñ	श्--ś
ट--ṭ	ष्--ṣ
ठ--ṭh	स्--s
ड--ḍ	ह--h
ढ--ḍh	
ण--ṇ	
त--t	
थ--th	
द--d	
ध--dh	
न--n	

*Anusvāra* (·)--m̐

*Visarga* (:)--h̐



## CHAPTER I

# A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR

### 1. Date of Tāyumānavar

Tāyumānavar is not very distant from us in time. Nonetheless, a truly satisfactory biography of Tāyumānavar cannot be formulated, because of a negative attitude towards historical data amongst early Indian writers. This negative disposition is projected in the following point of view: "eating the fruit why must one need to know the name of the fruit and the tree."<sup>1</sup>

The scanty materials available are found in the introductions to the different editions of the Hymns of Tāyumānavar (*Tāyumānasvamikaḥ Pāṭalkaḥ*). Those materials are traced to the poet's only son and disciple Kanakasapapati, and to other disciples such as Aruḷayya Pillai and Koṭṭikkaraiṇānikaḥ. Although the details of the life of the poet-saint available in the different editions of his hymns are believable in themselves, they cannot be situated in time very well because there are no links with reliable historical facts and different editors have arrived at radically different conclusions about the date of Tāyumānavar.<sup>2</sup>

Before we examine the arguments in the different editions of the hymns of the poet, we shall consider three important sources which shed light on the date of the poet-saint. The first one is related to the genealogy of the *Cāramāmunivar Maṭha* of Tiruchirappalli.<sup>3</sup> It is a commonly accepted fact that a *maunaguru* ('The Silent Teacher') was the greatest head of the *maṭha* and that Tāyumānavar succeeded the *maunaguru* in that role. The period of that *maunaguru* and his successors is recorded on palmyra leaves available in the Library of the Dharmapuram Ādhinam.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Sourirajan of Sri Venkateswara University examined the leaves a few years ago and according to him the *maunaguru* was the head of the *maṭha* from 1579 to 1644 A.D., and Tāyumānavar succeeded the *maunaguru* and was in charge from 1644 to 1662 A.D.<sup>5</sup> I visited the *maunaguru maṭha* on December 29, 1985 and discussed with Mahalinga Tambiran, the

present head of the *maṭha*, the question of the reliability of the tradition that Tāyumānavar was the head of the *maṭha*. He said it is a reliable tradition and that there is a recorded document called the *etu* (palmyra leaves) to prove it, but I was not able to examine that document. However, an article entitled 'Tiruchy Malaikōyil' appeared in the *Centamiḷccelvi*<sup>6</sup> which was based on a study of those palmyra leaves. According to this article Maunattambiran was the head of the *maṭha* from 1501 to 1566 (*Śālivāhana* era), which corresponds to 1579 to 1644 A.D. and Tāyumānavar was the head from 1566 to 1584 (1644-62 A.D.). A list of some of the heads of the *maṭha* who followed is also given.<sup>7</sup> Thus, two separate sets of palm leaf manuscripts make Tāyumānavar head of the *maṭha* from 1644 to 1662 A.D.

The second source is the *Marapiyal*<sup>8</sup> which records the traditions of Śāiva *maṭhas*. On November 29, 1985 I visited the Dharmapuram Ādhinam to look for documents and had the opportunity to discuss the teachings of the poet-saint. I was fortunate in being allowed to see the *Marapiyal* of Śāiva *maṭhas* in the Dharmapuram Library Manuscript Records. In this document there is a chapter on Tāyumānavar which gives the date of the *samādhi* of Tāyumānavar as *Śālivāhana* era 1584 which corresponds to 1662 A.D. The *Marapiyal* also refers to the poet's disciple Arulayyar, the poet's aunt's son, who started a *maṭha* at a place called Annappenpettai and initiated Kanakasapapati (Tāyumānavar's son) into the ascetic way of life. This source also gives a list of those who succeeded Kanakasapapati, such as Aksayalinga Desikar, Ambalavana Desikar,<sup>9</sup> Somasundara Desikar, Vaidyalinga Desikar, Sadasiva Desikar and Sapapati Desikar who used to sign documents in the name of *Tāyumānapaṭṭāra sanniti* and who passed away on Tuesday the 22nd of August, 1885.

The 'In Memoriam' lines written by one of his disciples, Kotikkaraiñānikal, engraved on stones found at Ramanapuram, the place of Tāyumānavar's *samādhi*,<sup>10</sup> is the third document that throws light on the period of Tāyumānavar:

tukaḷaru-cāli-varuṭamā yirattaiñ—  
 nurreṭen pattumūṇṇu toṭaru  
 mikucupa-kirutam-varuṭam taimātam  
 veṇmati-vāra-nal-vicāka

. . . . tāyumānavanār  
civattiṇil kalantanar-inaṁe.<sup>11</sup>

According to these lines, it was on a Monday in January of the Śālivāhana era following 1583 (that is in 1584, which corresponds to 1662 A.D.) that the saint attained Śivam (*civattiṇil kalantanar riṇam*).

Although all of the above sources agree that the period of Tāyumānavar was the 17th century, and that the year of his *samādhi* was 1662 A.D., a variety of editions of the hymns of Tāyumānavar give confusing accounts of the life of the saint. The earliest edition I have come across is the 1862 edition by Arumukanavilar (Madras) but it does not give any account of the life of the saint. Neither did the 1881 edition from Madras by Sadasiva Pillai give any information about the life of the poet. In 1891 Sambandha Mudaliyar edited the hymns with a commentary and in a brief introduction he stated that Ketiliyappa Pillai, the father of Tāyumānavar, lived in Veṭāraṇyam about 260 years ago and held the post of *periyacampiratiyuttiyōkam*<sup>12</sup> (Chief Accountant) in Vijayaranga Chokkalinga Nāyakar's palace. The subsequent editions of Vajravelu Pillai (1899), P.N. Cidampara Mudaliyar and Brothers (1937) and B. Ratnanayakakar and Sons (1957) all repeat this point and speak about a Muthu Vijaya Raghunatha Chokkalinga Nāyakar during whose time, it is said, Tāyumānavar was in service in the Nāyak's court. There is, however, no Nāyak by that name in the genealogical list of the Nāyaks.<sup>13</sup>

Poovai Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar's *Tāyumānavar Pātal Meykaṇṭa Vrttiyurai* (Madras, 1916) (hereafter *TPMV*) is a commendable commentary, but it does not offer any specific information about the life of Tāyumānavar. The author says (p. 3) that Tāyumānavar's father Ketiliyappa Pillai was appointed accountant of the king during the Nāyakship of Vijayarakhunata Chokkalinga (1705-32 A.D.). This period was probably regarded as the time of birth of Tāyumānavar because of the popular tradition which said that the poet-saint was born while his father was in the service of the Nāyak of Tiruchirappalli. However, at the end of the introduction (p. 15), the same author, quotes the 'In Memoriam'—written by Kotikkaraṇiṇiyar, referred to above, as suggesting that the saint's *samādhi* was in 1659



(1660). The author seems to have been unconcerned that the two dates do not match.

P. Ramanatha Pillai's edition (1966) makes the same sort of mistake. He too points out that it was Vijayarakhunatha Chokalinga who appointed Kettiliyappa Pillai (p. 35), thus indicating that the birth of Tāyumānavar would probably be between 1705-32 A.D. On page 36, however, at the end of the Introduction, the author says that Tāyumānavar was the head of the *maṭha* in 1644 A.D. and was united with Śivam in 1662 A.D. These dates simply do not tally.

Swami Chidbhavananda of Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, Tirupparaitturai, has published (in Tamil) sections of the hymns of Tāyumānavar with commentaries. In one of his works in English<sup>14</sup> the author says that Tāyumānavar lived in the 17th century A.D. The same Ramakrishna Tapovanam published another work *Tāyumānasvamy Pātalkal* in 1980. In this edition the period of Tāyumānavar is given as 1704-36,<sup>15</sup> placing him in the 18th century.<sup>16</sup> The only reason for fixing the time as the 18th century is to locate the saint during the reign of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanata and Queen Meenakshi and to connect the saint's life with the incident of the Queen's passionate desire for him which made him leave the palace and become an ascetic.

The Tiruppanantal Kasi edition (1952) and the Dharmapuram Ādhinam edition (1965) and the *Tāyumānasvāmikaḷ Varalāṟum Noolāraicciyum* (1969) by K. Subramaniya Pillai refer to a Muthu Veerappa Nayakar as the ruler when Tāyumānavar was the head. None of these scholars, however, specify whether they are speaking of Muthu Veerappa I, II or III.<sup>17</sup> The following argument of Subramaniya Pillai, however, makes it clear that it could only have been Muttuveerappa I. If it was Muttu Krishnappa Nayakar (1602-09) who made Tāyumānavar's father the chief accountant of the Nāyak's court (p. 20), then the saint's birth could have occurred between 1601 and 1609. The Nāyak who succeeded Muthu Krishnappa was Muthu Veerappa I (1609-23)<sup>18</sup> during whose time Tāyumānavar's father might have passed away and Tāyumānavar might be expected to have taken up and continued his father's profession at the court. This seems quite likely, and it also fits well with the independent evidence cited earlier from the *maunaguru maṭha* tradition, the *Marapiyal* account and the 'In Memoriam' of Kotikkaraiñānikal.



I have mentioned above the tendency among scholars to bring Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha (1731-36) into the picture and to try to 'fit' Tāyumānavar's life into his lifetime. This is done in order to perpetuate the story of Queen Meenakshi's passion for Tāyumānavar which is supposed to have led to the poet-saint's leaving the court and starting his mendicant life. This story is still very popular and seems to be a 'must' for the editors since almost all editions refer to Meenakshi's affection for the saint. K. Subramaniya Pillai, a well-known scholar in Tamil, tries to retain the story in spite of historical difficulties. He argues<sup>19</sup> that the successor of Muthuveerappa (1608-25 A.D. according to him, but 1602-09 for R. Sewell) is a Queen (name is not given) who ruled from 1625 to 1627 and the Queen was followed by Vijayaranga Chokkanatha (1627-54 for the author; but 1704-31 for R. Sewell). These alterations of history are major and remain unsubstantiated. The generally accepted historical record shows no Queen ruling from Tiruchirappalli between 1625-27 and it does not mention that Vijayaranga Chokkanatha ruled the country from 1627 to 1654. After the death of Muthu Veerappa Nayak in 1623, it was his son Tirumala Nayak<sup>20</sup> (1623-59) who is generally thought to have ruled the country.

Because of the inconsistencies found in the historical data in different editions of the hymns I am inclined to follow the *maunaguru* tradition, the *Marapiyal* of the Dharmapuram Library Manuscript Records and the engraved 'In Memoriam' of Kotikkaraiñānikal. Following these records, as presented and discussed above, we can safely fix the period of Tāyumānavar as the 17th century or to be precise from 1602 to 1662 A.D.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the popular story of the Queen is a pious embellishment to show the high moral character of the saint, or it might be the result of a story teller inserting the wrong Queen's name or the wrong saint's name into a story built around the various legendary figures of the region.

## 2. Early Life and Career

Although the poet-saint of the 17th century belongs to a relatively recent time, we have only a few details of his life. We get some autobiographical facts from his own poems, but most of the life accounts depend on traditions and *Sthala-Purāṇas*.<sup>22</sup> Very few details are found in the scanty reports left by the poet's close

disciples such as Kotikkaraiñānikal and Arulayyappā Pillai. This wide variety of reliable and not-so-reliable source materials are mixed together in different proportions by editors and, consequently, we find somewhat divergent life narratives in each edition of the hymns of the saint. Nevertheless, with the help of all those sources, we are able to sketch a fairly satisfactory outline of the saint's life.

In Veṭāraṇyam, a sacred place situated on the bank of the Kaveri River, there lived a community of *vellāla*<sup>23</sup> families. Tāyumānavar's family belonged to that community. His parents, Ketiliyappa Pillai and Gajavalli, were God-fearing people. His father was employed in the local temple of Veṭāraṇyam which was under the administration of a Śaiva *maṭha*. Once he provided a befitting royal welcome and all kinds of conveniences for Muthukrisnappa Nāyak (1602-09) of Tiruchirappalli who came to Veṭāraṇyam on his way to the sea for a dip and a *darśan* of the local deity. The Nāyak was pleased with Ketiliyappa and subsequently appointed him chief accountant of the palace in Tiruchirappalli.

The family, having moved from Veṭāraṇyam to Tiruchirappalli, earnestly prayed to Tāyumānaeśvarar, the presiding deity of Tiruchirappalli, for a second child because their first son had been given in adoption to the childless Sivacidambara Pillai, the brother of Ketiliyappa Pillai. Their prayers were answered and another son was born at Veṭāraṇyam at the mother's house. The boy was named Tāyumānavar because it was believed the child was born by the grace of Tāyumānavar, the deity of Tiruchirappalli. It has been noted that on his birthday five planets appeared together indicating the incarnation of a deity. Astrologers prophesied that the child would either be a great monarch or a great mendicant.<sup>24</sup> The parents brought up the child with great expectations. They taught him Tamil and Sanskrit, and the hymns the poet later composed and sang are evidence of his thorough mastery of both languages.<sup>25</sup> The reference he makes to the four *Vedas*, and the *Āgamas*, the *Epics* and *Purāṇas* are proof of his Sanskrit training and early initiation into the sacred literature of the country.<sup>26</sup> From his hymns we gather that he also read with rapture the Tamil hymns of Tirumūlar (ca. 6th century A.D.)<sup>27</sup> Tiruñāna Campantar (Skt. Tirujñāna Sambandhar) (7th century A.D.),<sup>28</sup> Tirunāvukkaracu (Appar) (7th century A.D.),<sup>29</sup>



Cuntarar (Skt. Sundarar) (9th century A.D.),<sup>30</sup> and Mānikkavācakar (9th century A.D.?).<sup>31</sup>

From the hymns of Tāyumānavar we also infer that he was equally well acquainted with the *śāstra* or philosophical literature. In the hymns we find reference to Meykaṇṭār (13th century A.D.), the author of *Śivañānapōtam* (Skt. *Śivajñāna Bodham*) (hereafter *SB*),<sup>32</sup> Aruṇanṭi Śivācāriyar (13th century A.D.), the author of *Sivañāna Cittiyar* (Skt. *Sivajñāna Siddhiyār*) (hereafter *SS*),<sup>33</sup> Maraijñāna Sambanda Deśikar, the teacher of Umāpati,<sup>34</sup> Umapati (14th century A.D.),<sup>35</sup> the author of Eight Siddhānta *Śāstras*.<sup>36</sup> These four preceptors, who systematized and elaborated Śaiva Siddhānta, are highly esteemed and they are the *santānācāryas*—the Teachers of Śaiva religion.

His esteem for and knowledge of the above-mentioned religious and philosophical literature probably quite naturally created in him an aptitude for religious truth. We can rightly infer, therefore, that in time this religious quest made him look for a *guru* with whom he could discuss religious and philosophical issues and who would further initiate him for an indepth experience of religious truth.

Even though he had this religious background and spiritual craving, the poet-saint assumed the duties of chief accountant of the palace after the demise of his father. The Nāyak who was in power at the time of Tāyumānavar was Muthuveerappa Nayakar I (1609-23).<sup>37</sup> Regarding the appointment of Tāyumānavar to the same post that his father held, it is said that when he was called for a test to see whether he was as able as his father, the ruler, on seeing his handsome appearance alone, appointed him chief accountant.<sup>38</sup> Legend has it that when he came to the palace, his feet left a permanent mark on the sand and the courtiers saw on the footprints the *padmarekha*.<sup>39</sup> The king and the officers were surprised to see this and enquired about the person who had come to the palace at that particular time. The courtiers said that it was Tāyumānavar. The king sent for him and asked him to walk along that way again and the officials compared his foot-prints with those engraved in the sand. When it was found that they were the same, the king was delighted to have Tāyumānavar in the palace.<sup>40</sup> Tāyumānavar fulfilled his duties with care to the complete satisfaction of the king.

### 3. Meeting the Guru and Quitting the Career

The quest for the knowledge of eternal truth and the passion for its experience made Tāyumānavar reflect on religious and philosophical issues even while carrying on his duties in the Nāyak's court. He also used to discuss those problems with other court officials who had been honoured in the titles like *pundit*, *kavirāj*<sup>41</sup> etc. His enquiring mind was very earnest about knowing Reality<sup>42</sup> and he had a passionate longing to meet a *guru*<sup>43</sup> who would initiate him into the ascetic way of life and reveal to him the ultimate Truth.<sup>44</sup>

Tāyumānavar's encounter with the *maunaguru* (The Silent Teacher), while serving the Nayak of Tiruchirappalli, marked a turning point in his life. Tāyumānavar, as usual, went to the temple of Tāyumāneśvarar for worship. On his return from the shrine he met the *maunaguru*, possibly in front of the Cāramāmunivar *maṭha* in Tiruchirappalli. This meeting has been described as similar to that of a wife being enraptured by the presence of her husband or to that of iron being attracted to a magnet.<sup>45</sup> This meeting was a wonderful experience in the life of the poet-saint. This experience of the divine presence, love, happiness, peace and joy is expressed in the praise of the *guru* found in the section of a poem called *Maunaguruvanaṅkam* (Obeisance to the Silent Teacher):

...civānupūti  
maṇṇaloru corṅkoṇṇ enaittaṭutt āṇṭanpin  
vāḷvitta ṇānakuruvē  
mantrakuruvē yōka tantrakuruvē mūlaṇ  
marapil varum maṇṇakuruvē.

Oh, Thou preceptor of *mantras*, Oh Thou  
Preceptor of *yoga tantra*, Oh, Thou  
preceptor of *mōṇa*, who art descended  
from Mūlar. Oh Thou preceptor of Wisdom,  
who has through 'one word' saved me causing  
to attain the state of *śivānubhūti*.

(V. 4)

According to tradition, the disciple shedding tears of joy fell at the feet of the Master. It seems that the *guru* was holding a book in his hand and Tāyumānavar, filled with curiosity, asked for the name of the book which the *guru* was carrying with him. To his surprise the *guru* was silent and walked ahead towards the Tāyu-



mānaeśvarar temple. Tāyumānavar followed the *guru* and finally the *guru* reached the temple and sat in *padmāsana*.<sup>46</sup> The *guru* was impressed with the disciple's sincerity of purpose and started answering his questions. To the question regarding the name of the book the *guru* held, the answer was *SS*. To the questions what is *Śiva*, what is *jñāna* and what is *siddhi*, the answers were *pāti* is *Śivam*; knowing Him as He is *jñānam*; and the fruit of that knowledge is *siddhi* (realization). The truth-loving poet-saint asked many more questions concerning the nature of Reality, the knowability of Reality, human bondage, and freedom from that bondage (*pāśam*). It is said that the *guru* smiled at those questions and asked him to make himself fit for receiving the truth through the removal of doubts and the destruction of contradictions with the help of the proper *dikṣā* (initiation) and the study of the book *SS*.<sup>47</sup> The *guru* asked the saint to depart and to continue his studies and work and to have a *gṛhasītha* (householder) life until he was fit for the path of *jñāna*, only then would he, the *guru*, initiate Tāyumānavar into the ascetic life. Having greeted him in a special way by saying *cummāiru* (be still),<sup>48</sup> the *guru* went away. Tāyumānavar left the temple with joy and gratitude at the love of this *guru* who opened his inner eye to see and experience the truth behind all worldly things.<sup>49</sup>

Tāyumānavar continued to discharge his duties in the royal court. At the same time, however, he was meditating on what the *guru* had advised. He assumed a standing posture to practise meditation in front of *dakṣiṇamūrti* in order to attain *advaita mukti* which is the merging of the soul with the Ultimate Reality. This craving to live in the Divine Presence and to live in tune with the Infinite had changed his attitude towards his life in the royal court. The things he witnessed in and around the society of his time clearly revealed the nature of the wordly life. The 17th century Vijayanagar history is filled with accounts of political butchery, local treachery, social animosity, royal indolence and religious hypocrisy. The royal court, where he was employed, was disrupting his spiritual sensibility. This social and religious situation, coupled with the meeting with the *guru* or the *mauna-guru darśanam*, brought about a revolutionary change in his vision of life in this world.

As knowledge gradually dawned upon Tāyumānavar, he rose above the transitory forms of royal comfort and happiness. His

internalized attention, intensified concentration, and faith in the inner reality gave him a new spirit that made him put a stop to his work in the royal household. In order to conform to life in harmony with the Divine, he eventually left the palace and the position he held in the royal court.

#### 4. Call to Asceticism

Tāyumānavar started his life as a wandering *sannyāsin* (ascetic) by going on pilgrimage. He, together with his cousin, visited many places such as Nallūr,<sup>50</sup> Veeraḷimalai,<sup>51</sup> Pudukottai<sup>52</sup> and Rameswaram.<sup>53</sup> It is said that in Veerḷimalai he stayed with the group of ascetics called *cittars* (Skt. *Siddhars*). According to the poet-saint these *Siddhars* are “those who have divine powers; who have attained the noblest order of viewing Vedānta and Siddhanta alike”: *vetānta cittānta camaraca naṇṇilaiperṇa vittaka cittarkaṇam* (VII. 1ff). We shall later see that the Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasa* position becomes a favourite theme in the religious poetry of Tāyumānavar, a theme which runs through the whole corpus of his hymns.

Tāyumānavar might earlier have heard of the greatness of these saintly people and it was very appropriate for him to visit them and experience their spiritual fervor. He calls them ‘Śiva-yōgins’ (contemplators of Śiva, VII.3); ‘masters of perfection’ (VII.4), ‘authorities in the matter of attaining the final *mukti*’ (VII.8), and ‘people related to spiritual joy’ (VII.9). It is very important that early in his quest he went to the *Siddhar* group and they became an inspiration for his own asceticism. K. Subramania Pillai<sup>54</sup> tells us of another event based on hearsay or local legend that happened during his stay in Veeraḷimalai. In this village the saint was looked after by a *veḷḷāḷa* who was childless. It is said that after caring for Tāyumānavar this person was blessed with a son. The boy was given the name Tāyumānavar and according to Subramania Pillai even now the members of the family attach the prefix ‘Tāyumānavar’ to their names.

From Veeraḷimalai, the saint journeyed to Rameswaram. While he was in Rameswaram, his brother, Chidambaram Pillai, visited the place and persuaded the poet-saint and Arulayyappa Pillai to go to Veṭṭaraṇyam. They went to Veṭṭaraṇyam where he was urged by his mother and brother to get married and enter into the family life. He then recalled the *upadeśa* (advice) of the



*maunaguru*. In compliance with the request of the family and in obedience to the *maunaguru* (The Silent Teacher) he married Mattuvarkuḷali ('lady of flowing fragrant tresses') and had one child by her, named Kanakasapapati, before she suddenly died.

The death of his mother, followed closely by that of his wife, proved to be a turning point in the life of Tāyumānavar. The departure of his mother and wife convinced him of the fleeting nature of life. Their demise, at about the same time, strengthened his deep-rooted spiritual desire for ascetic life. He, therefore, entrusted his son and all his possessions to his brother and left to follow the ascetic way of life.

It is likely that from Veṭāraṇyam he left for Tiruchirappalli to meet his *guru* who had promised him that he would see him after the fulfilment of his duties in the court and in family life. Now, seeing the fitness and disposition of Tāyumānavar, the *guru* performed the *nirvāṇa dīkṣā*<sup>55</sup> and initiated him into the ascetic order.

Having become completely separated from the bonds of family and from all worldly ties,<sup>56</sup> Tāyumānavar became a full-fledged ascetic donning the robes of a wandering *sannyāsin*. As a *jīvanmukta* (liberated while living in the world) he travelled from place to place visiting shrines, singing the praises of *Śiva* and drawing people to the presence of *Śiva*. According to tradition<sup>57</sup> Tāyumānavar became the head of the *Maunaguru Maṭha* in Tiruchirappalli and in 1662 A.D. he 'attained the lotus feet of the Lord'.<sup>58</sup>

#### NOTES

1. P. Sri, *Samarasa Jñāniyar* (Madras: Amuda Nilayam, 1963), p. 37.
2. The date of the Saint is still an unsolved problem. Isaac Tambyah suggests a number of probable periods based on the arguments in the different editions of the hymns of Tāyumānavar and they range from 1659 to 1805 A.D. (Cf. Isaac Tambyah, *Psalm of a Śaiva Saint*, London: Luzac & Co., 1925) pp. XI. Kamil V. Zvelebil finds fixing Tāyumānavar's date a complicated and difficult problem. According to him the date could be 1704-42, 1706-44 or 1608-64 A.D. See *Tamil Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974), p. 111.
3. It is also written as Trichnopoly. See, Bishop R. Caldwell, *A History of Tinnevely* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1982), p. 36; R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, *History of the Nāyaks of Madura* (Madras: University of

Madras, 1980), pp. 1, 17, 37ff. See also B. S. Baliga, *Madras District Gazetteers* (Madras: Government of Madras, 1960), pp. 1, 21, 30ff.

4. The *mauna maṭha* is under the administrative control of the Dharmapuram Ādhīnam.

5. P. Sourirajan, *A Critical Study of Tāyumānavar* (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1978), p. 16.

6. S. Anavaratavinayaka Pillai, "Tiruchy Malaikōyil", *Centamiḷcelvi*, 12 (1936), No. 2, pp. 82-5; No. 3, pp. 124-26; No. 4, pp. 174-177; No. 5, pp. 221-22; No. 6, pp. 269-71. At the start of the article the writer says that he had copied the palmyra leaves and the text was edited by M. Natesa Mudaliyar.

7. The year given is Śalivāhana era. That era began in 78 BCE, so we add 78 to get the Christian era. Maunatambiran (1579-1644 A.D.), Tāyumānatambiran (1644-62 A.D.), Namacivayatambiran (1662-85 A.D.), Tillainayakatambiran (1685-93 A.D.), Chitambaratambiran (1693-1715 A.D.), Arunachalatambiran (1715-1753 A.D.), Vaidyalingatambiran (1754-1800 A.D.), Chitambaratambiran (1800-24 A.D.), Ambalavanatambiran (1824-26 A.D.).

8. *Marapiyal* is similar to a chronicle which records significant events of the Śaiva maṭhas. Unfortunately no page numbers are used.

9. It is also recorded here that the Saint's hymns were collected from one Arunachalam who was a disciple of Ambalavasadesikar.

10. The place of *samādhi* is known as Lakshmipuram.

11. *Tāyumānaswāmikal Pāṭal*, Tiruppanantal Edition, 1952, p. 16. Poovai Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar edition (1937) also give the same 'In Memoriam' (p. 15). However, the date of *samādhi* is stated slightly differently. It is Śalivāhana era following 1581 according to this edition.

12. Sambandha Mudaliyar, *Tāyumānaswāmikal pāṭal* (Madras: Vidya Vinodhini Series, 1891), p. 1.

13. N. Katiraivelpillai too refers to the same King. Cf. "Tāyumānar tattuva vicāram", *Jñānapōṭini*, IV, no. 11 (1901), p. 402.

14. Swami Chidbhavananda, *The Garland of Parāparam* (Tiruchirappalli: Sri Ramakrishna Tapovanam, 1979), p. 1.

15. This falls during the reign of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanata (1704-31) and that of Queen Meenakshi (1731-36).

16. There are other writers who locate Tāyumānavar in the 18th century. Ratnavelu Mudaliyar (ed), *A Tamil Dictionary of Proper Names* (Madras, 1908) states that Tāyumānavar died in 1742 A.D.; E. Waites, *The Way of Divine Union*, (1915) is of the opinion that the Saint was born between 1705 and 1707 A.D. Also, see K. Kuppuswamy Mudaliyar in *Centamiḷ*, VIII (1904), p. 474; G. E. Philipps in *Madras Christian College Magazine*, XXVII (1910), p. 513; L. D. Barnett in *The Heart of India* (1908), p. 185; G. McKenzie Cobban in *Madras Christian College Magazine* II (1884), p. 2.

17. The periods of these three Nāyaks were: Muthu Veerappa I (1609-23); Muthu Veerappa II (1659); Muthu Veerappa III (1682-89). Cf. Robert Sewell, *Lists of Inscriptions and Sketch of Southern India* (Madras: Archaeological Survey of Southern India, Vol. II, 1884). Unless otherwise stated, the dates pertaining to the Nāyaks quoted in this work will be from



R. Sewell. Also cf. R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, *op.cit.*, and B. S. Baliga, *Madras District Gazetteers Madurai* (1960), pp. 52ff.

18. For Subramania Pillai the period is 1608-25. See K. Subramania Pillai, *Tāyumānaswāmikāḥ Varalāṟum Nūlārāicciyum* (Madras: Kazhagam, 1969), p. 20.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

20. N. Kandasamy is of the opinion that Tāyumānavar was the Auditor General—the Chancellor of the Exchequer—of the Madurai Kingdom which was ruled by Tirumala Nayak. See, “Tāyumānavar—Tamil Statesman—Saint”, *The Hindu* (March 18, 1962). This would imply that Tāyumānavar continued his work even after the death of Muthu Veerappa I.

21. This time comes very close to that which is given to the saint in the preface of Barnett and G. U. Pope, *Catalogue of Tamil Books in the British Museum* (London: 1909), p. vi. The period ascribed to the poet there is 1650 A.D.

22. The *Sthala Purāṇa* is a glorified local legend, often written up with a religious bias. It is always in verse. The *Mayūra Purāṇa* has 6519 verses; the Tirunelveli *Sthala Purāṇa* has 9000 verses. Usually it starts with glorification of the shrine, the deity installed in the temple, the temple tank, the temple tree, the local saints etc. This form of *purāṇa* holds out a tremendous appeal to the common man.

23. The *vellālas* are cultivators. The cultivation of rice by means of irrigation could have been the special feature of the *vellālas*. Therefore they occupied the bulk of the land and enjoyed a high social status. They were rich and held key positions in the civil and military administration. *Madras District Gazetteers, op.cit.*, p. 27.

24. N. Katiraivelpillai, *op.cit.*, p. 403.

25. *Tāyumānaswāmikāḥ Pāṭal*, (TP), Tirruppanantal Edition (1952): I.3; VI.1; VII.10; VIII.5; XXVII.25. References to the hymns of Tāyumānavar will be made from this edition.

26. TP., X. 3; XIV.5; XXVIII.16-17; XLVI.28; V. 1; XVIII.5 & 17.

27. TP., V.1—10; XIV.31. Indian scholars place Tirumūlar after the *Śaṅgam* poets and before the appearance of the *Tēvāram* Saints (i.e. between 4th and 7th century A.D.). The following Indian scholars ascribe various dates: Murugesu Mudaliar 4th century A.D.; M. Arunachalam 5th A.D. Narayana Aiyar 6th A.D. (*Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India*, Madras: University of Madras, 1974, p. 209); Ramana Sastri 6th A.D. (in his introduction to M. V. Visvanatha Pillai's edition of the *Tirumantiram*, Madras: Ripon Press, 1912). Western scholars too do not agree on the period of Tirumūlar. For K. Zvelebil the period is 7th century A.D. (*Tamil Literature*, Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1974, p. 55); for J. Filliozat it is 7th or 8th century A.D. and for J. N. Farquhar 8th century A.D. (*An Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967, p. 93).

28. TP., XIV.30; XXXVII.4; XLV.3.1; XLV.13.9.

29. TP., XIV.30; XLV.13.1 & 6; XLV.3.2.

30. TP., XLV.3.3.

31. TP., XI.3; XIV.31; XLV.3.4; XLIII.356; XLVI.11. Sambandar, Appar, Sundarar and Māṇikkavācakar are the Founders of Saiva Religion

(*samayācāryas*). The hymns sung by the great trio (Sambandhar, Appar and Sundarar) are collectively called the *Tēvāram* which constitutes the first Seven Books (Books 1-111, Hymns of Sambandar; Book IV-VI, Hymns of Appar; Book VII, Hymns of Sundarar) of the Śaivite Canonical literature known as the *Tirumuṟai*, which are twelve in number (*Pannīru Tirumuṟai*). Māṇikkavācakar's *Tiruvācakam* and *Tirukkōvaiyar* (Book VIII), the works of Nine poets called *Tiruvīśappā* and *Tirupallāṇṭu* by Centanar (Book IX), the *Tirumantiram* by Tirumūlar (Book X), the works of Eleven poets including Nakkīratevar's *Tirumurukāṟruppaṭai* and the Ten works of Nambi Āṇṭar Nambi (Book XI) and the *Periya Purāṇam* by Cēkkiḷār (12th century A.D.) (Book XII) are the other Books of Tamil Śaivite canon of devotional literature (*stōtra*).

32. TP; XLV.2.4. Meykaṇṭar (=the one who has seen the Truth), in this exceptionally succinct work, provided the first systematic exposition of the tenets of Tamil Śaiva religion. This most coherent manual of Śaiva Siddhānta provides the basic and most closely reasoned religious philosophy of Tamil Śaivism and the subsequent doctrinal works of the School were only elaborations of the philosophic contents of *SB*.

33. TP., XLV.2.5. Aruṇanti, according to a popular tradition, was at first the preceptor and then the close disciple of Meykaṇṭar. *SS* is the authoritative metaphysical and epistemological elaboration of the *SB*. This most comprehensive and systematic work of Śaiva Siddhānta in Tamil is presented in two parts: part one in the form of refutation of other systems called *parapakkam* and the second part known as *supakkam*, is a detailed commentary on the *SB*. A second work of Aruṇanṭi, the *Irupāvirupatu*, is both a eulogy of Meykaṇṭar, the author, of *SB*, and an exposition of some of the teachings of Śaiva Siddhānta.

34. TP., XLV.2.6.

35. TP., XLV.2.7.

36. His Eight works, collectively called *Siddhānta Aṣṭaka*, are profound expositions of his clear grasp of Śaiva Siddhānta. The Eight works are the *Śivapirakacam*, the *Tiruvaruṭpayan*, the *Caṇkarpa Nirākaraṇam*, the *Pōṟṟip-pakroṭai*, the *Nenṇuviṭututu*, the *Viṇāvenpā*, the *Koṭṭikkavi*, and the *Uṇmai Neṟiviḷakkam*. For a brief analysis of these works see M. Dhavamony, *Love of God According to Śaiva Siddhānta* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 125ff.

37. Muthu Krishnappa Nayak passed away while Ketiliyappa Pillai was in service. The successor to Muthu Krishnappa Nayak was his son Muthu Veerappa I and during his reign Ketiliyappa Pillai passed away.

38. P. Sri, *Camaraca Jñāniyar*, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

39. This is a peculiar and rare kind of line on the palm of the hand (or the foot), in the form of a lotus flower. It is considered a sign of greatness.

40. N. Katiraivel Pillai, "Tāyumānatattuva Vicāram", p. 404.

41. Kuppuswamy Mudaliyar, "Śrīmat-Tāyumānacuvāmikaḷ Varalāṅṁ Avar Matakkoḷkaiyum", *Centamil*, III (1904), p. 476.

42. T.P., V.6; V.8; XX.7; XXIII.2; XII.7; XLI.4.

43. T.P. XXVII.15; XXXIII.2.

44. In Śaiva Siddhānta, the idea of God has its highest expression in the

conception of a *Guru* who is the spiritual preceptor. When an aspirant aspires for a vision of God and Communion with Him, the Lord appears in a suitable form and gives spiritual initiation depending on the spiritual maturity of the aspirant. Tāyumānavar repeatedly referred to the *Guru* in his hymns: VI: 1; IX.6 & 9; XIII.7; XVI.8; LXIII.126 etc. The section *Cinmayānantaguru* (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) is nothing but an extolling of the greatness of God in the person of the *Guru*.

45. N. Katiraivel Pillai, "Tāyumāna tattuva vicāram", p. 405.

46. It is a meditation posture where one sits with legs stretched in front of him placing his right leg on the left thigh and the left leg on the right thigh.

47. N. Katiraivel Pillai, "Tāyumāna tattuva Vicāram", pp. 406-09.

48. This pronouncement from the *Guru* had tremendous influence in the life of the saint. In his hymns he refers to *cummāiru* in many places (V. 2; XI.1; XII.6 & 8; XIV.31). Also cf. M. Arunachalam, 'Cummā', *Kumarakuruparan*, XIV (1963), 583-91. This brief article gives the etymological meaning of the word *cummā* and briefly discusses the sense in which *cummā* is used by Aruṇakirīnatar, Campanta Munivar, Parañoti Munivar and Kumarakuruparar.

49. Kuppuswamy Mudaliyar, "Srimat Tāyumanaswāmikal Varalārum avar Matakkolikaiyum", pp. 476-78.

50. About ten miles from Tiruchirappalli.

51. About twenty miles from Tiruchirappalli.

52. Pudukkottai was also known as Kapilai Nakar.

53. Rameswaram, further south of Pudukkottai, was known as Tevai Nakar.

54. K. Subramaniya Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

55. *Dikṣā* (initiation) is an important ceremony in the Śaiva religion. Through different *dikṣās* the disciple who seeks truth is spiritually purified and made fit to realize Supreme Truth. According to Umāpati (14th century A.D.), one of the preceptors (*Santānūcāryas*) of the Śaiva Siddhānta principles and philosophy, *dikṣā* is manifestation of the power of Śiva (*Śivasya vyāpārātmaśaktiḥ*). This is performed by a competent teacher (*guru*) and it enables one to diligently perform one's duties and helps in the hearing and understanding of the revealed word. See K. Sivaraman, *Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), p. 385. Also see J. Gonda, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), p. 315. *Nirvāṇa dikṣā* is a higher form of *dikṣā* where the (*guru*) who has already attained God-vision and is ever in God-experience initiates the disciple towards a direct God-realization. With this *dikṣā* the thoughts, the words and the deeds of the disciple become holy and God-realization is made possible. This immediate means of *mokṣa* "qualifies one for directly receiving *jñāna*". K. Sivaraman., *op.cit.*, p. 385.

56. *TP*. XL.1; XLI.9.

57. Anavaratavinayaka Pillai, "Tiruchi Malaikoyil", p. 6.

58. K. Subramaniya Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 18.







## CHAPTER II

# TAMILNADU DURING THE TIME OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR

### 1. Political and Social Situation

The life and thoughts of a thinker or writer will always be influenced to some extent by the political, social, economic and religious concerns of the particular period. The socio-economic and politico-religious situation during the time of Tāyumānavar can be understood only with reference to the political actions of the Nāyaks<sup>1</sup> who started as lieutenants of the powerful Vijayanagar emperor and ended up as semi-independent rulers during the declining years of the Vijayanagar empire.

The Tamil country, under the vigorous Vijayanagar emperor, Krishnadeva Raya (1509-29), was divided into three Nāyakships: Madura, Tanjore and Gingi. The Madura Nāyakship comprised Salem District and the whole of the region south of the Kaverī. Tanjore included the fertile region of the Kaverī, while the Gingi Nāyakship was made up of the coastal area from Nellore in the north to the river Coleroon in the south. The Nāyaks who governed the respective regions ruled largely through local chiefs also called Nāyaks (*pālaiyagars/poligars*). The *poligars* had to supply military forces (*pālaiyams*) to the central government through the principal Nāyaks.<sup>2</sup>

The foundation of the Nāyakship of Madura was actually laid by the Vijayanagar emperor Achyuta Raya when Viswanatha Nāyak became 'the master of the Kingdom of Madura'.<sup>3</sup> The year assigned to the above event, according to Nelson, is 1558-59.<sup>4</sup> As regards the power enjoyed and the continuity of the Nāyaks, the *Epigraphica Indica* states that "the Nāyak regime developed first into a governorship which became hereditary and then into what was practically a hereditary monarchy".<sup>5</sup> The Nāyaks fully acknowledged the overlordship of the Vijayanagar emperors and the central government until the battle of Taḷikoṭa in 1565 A.D. This battle, a combined attack of the armies of the sultans of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golconda and Bidar against

the Vijayanagar empire, greatly weakened the empire and diminished allegiance on the part of the Nāyaks towards the Vijayanagar emperor.

The Civil War of Topur (1614-17 A.D.) dealt the final blow against Vijayanagar. The Civil War was the result of the imprudent policy of Sriranga II which estranged the feelings of his subjects and strengthened the hands of his enemies.<sup>6</sup> The King's subjects were disappointed because of the mismanagement of the affairs of the state. The injudicious demands made on some high officers, like the surrendering of lands, money and jewels, made them drift away from the emperor. The resultant Civil War ruined the empire both materially and morally. To sum up, the battle of Talikoṭa and the Civil War of Topur brought about the final downfall of the once glorious Vijayanagar empire.

The history of Vijayanagar after 1617 is replete with constant wars and plundering raids. The Nāyaks now set themselves up in opposition to the weak Vijayanagar emperors and openly conspired with enemies of the empire. The selfish policy of Tirumala Nāyak of Madura, for instance, resulted in the Muslim invasion of Gingi which later adversely affected Tanjore and Madura as well. Though Sriranga III tried to restore the power of the empire the Nāyaks of Madura and Gingi resisted the attempts of the emperor and this resulted in another attack on the kingdom by the Muslim states of Bijapur and Golconda.<sup>7</sup>

The author of *Samarasa Jñāniyār*<sup>8</sup> has remarked that in the time of Tāyumānavar there was political confusion in Tamilnadu and that robbery, treachery and debauchery were characteristic of the political strategies employed. This remark seems appropriate if one looks at the history. The tragic death of Sriranga II and his family is one of the frequently cited examples as evidence of political confusion and moral perversion. During the reign of Venkata I (1614 A.D.) a civil war was raging over the question of succession to the throne, between the loyal supporters of the king headed by Yachama Nāyaka and the supporters of the son of Venkata under the leadership of Jagga Raya. When Venkata I died, Sriranga II became the king but his accession to the throne was opposed by Jagga Raya and Timma Nāyak. These two came to the palace under the pretext of paying homage to the king and suddenly broke into open rebellion. They seized the king, deposed him, and then put Jagga Raya's nephew on the

throne. The loyal captain, Yachama, then hurriedly organized the troops of Sriranga II and tried to save the king. He was unsuccessful in this but managed to save Sriranga's second son Rama. Meanwhile Jagga Raya sent his brother either to murder the king or force the king to kill himself. The king under pressure beheaded the queen, and then slew his youngest son and daughter. The king's eldest son then beheaded his wife, and finally Sriranga fell on his own sword and killed himself. Captain Yachama, however, reorganized the army, challenged Jagga Raya, and defeated all the king's enemies and enthroned Prince Rama, son of Sriranga, as the new ruler. Both Yachama and Jagga Raya then strengthened their armies with the support of their respective adherents. In this trouble-ridden situation the Madura Nāyak lent his support to Jagga Raya, while the Tanjore Nāyak joined forces with Yachama.<sup>9</sup>

South India was thus gradually thrown into great disorder by this fighting amongst the Vijayanagar factions. The Nāyaks, who were after more power, seized the opportunity to abandon their allegiance to the Vijayanagar emperor. The Nāyaks of Madura and Tanjore became quasi-independent by 1640 A.D. It is said that the Vijayanagar prince, Sriranga, was sent to bring them back into submission again. Tirumala Nāyak, having obtained help from Golconda, repelled the royal troops and by 1642 he was practically independent and ruled Tiruchirappalli and Coimbatore as well as Madura. The Tanjore Nāyak was not so successful. Though he made an attack on the Gingi Fort, Raghunath Nāyak of Tanjore had to submit to the power of the Vijayanagar suzerain eventually.<sup>10</sup>

The political and social situation of the whole of Tamilnadu was deteriorating day by day. In one of the letters written in 1640 by the English Factory at Madras to its Directors in London we have the following:

this country is at present full of wars and troubles, for the King (of Vijayanagar) and three of his Nāiks are at variance, and the King of Bijapur's army is come into the country on one side, and the King of Golconda on the other, both against this (the Vijayanagar) King.<sup>11</sup>

In 1648 A.D. the Bijapur Sultan brought in 8,000 freebooters



who were not paid soldiers but were permitted to plunder as a reward for their service. The raids and robberies and devastations of those freebooters led to the ravaging of a vast part of the country.<sup>12</sup>

Internally, the Nāyaks of Madura and Tanjore were constantly at war with one another, and the armies of Bijapur made descent on the country with intent to conquer all the Hindu rulers. About 1663 the forces of Bijapur ruined the country about Trichinopoly until they were beaten off by Chokkanatha of Madura. They destroyed the suburbs, seized the crops, and burned the villages.<sup>13</sup>

The constant war between the Nāyaks, the invasions from the Golconda and Bijapur Sultans, and the famines occurring regularly especially in 1630 and 1670, brought about anarchy in the country.

The Nāyaks failed to understand the crucial problems of the people. We find a good example of the people's reaction to the oppressive nature of their ruler in an inscription of the time. Vijayaranga Chokkanatha was the Nāyak of Madura in 1712. In spite of the suffering of the people resulting from wars and famines, the ruler increased taxes and did not do anything to help them. One man, in utter helplessness, threw himself from a tower and was killed. Then, at last, the Nāyak reduced the taxes.<sup>14</sup> The political, social and economic situation of Tamilnadu from the 16th to the 18th centuries is summarized by two historians in the following statements:

J.H. Nelson concludes that:

The extinction of the Nāyak dynasty was undoubtedly a great blessing for Madura; because, it was opposed to all improvement. . .and rendered true happiness an impossibility to all classes, rich and poor, noble and degraded.<sup>15</sup>

Bishop R. Caldwell wrote:

Their (the Nāyak's) reigns record little more than a disgraceful catalogue of debaucheries, treacheries, plunderings, oppressions, murders and civil commotions, relieved only



by the factitious splendour of gifts to temples, idols and priests, by means of which they apparently succeeded in getting the brahmans and poets to speak well of them, and thus in keeping the mass of the people patient under their rule.<sup>16</sup>

These evaluations of the Nāyak's rule show the general historical atmosphere of the period. We do not have any internal evidence in the writings of Tāyumānavar about the political situation of his time, but it would be legitimate to assume that as a faithful servant in the royal court he would have silently witnessed treachery, murder, oppression, moral degradation and political intrigue. We are probably also justified in assuming that the depressing events going on in the royal circle made him quit the palace and go in search of peace, higher values and eternal truths. It would not be an over-statement to assume that the political and social gloom made him compose hymns: (a) picturing human nature as being motivated by unlimited greed, with the kings and rulers always struggling to extend their power (II.10); (b) revealing the transitoriness of the whole world with its glory, wealth and social position (II.8; VIII.10); (c) disclosing the illusiveness of the luxurious life and pleasure in the world (X.9); and (d) inviting everyone to seek emancipation from the clutches of this life (X.10).

## 2. Religious Situation

The religious policy of the Nāyaks and the religious situation of Tamilnadu during the period under consideration are also important for understanding Tāyumānavar's life and thought. The religious policy of the Vijayanagar emperors and the Nāyaks was one of toleration. Although, generally Vaiṣṇavites, they actively supported other sects of Hinduism by way of liberal grants to *maṭhas* and temples. Other religions like Islam and Christianity were also tolerated in the empire. In *La Mission du Maduré d'après des Documents inédits*<sup>17</sup> it is said about Tirumala Nāyak that 'he loved and protected the Christian Religion, whose excellence he recognized'. Veerappa Nāyak's permission gave missionaries the opportunity to build Churches, and Dé Nobili's famous missionary activity in Tiruchirappalli (1606-48 A.D.) took place during and just after the reign of

Muttu Krishnappa. These examples show their policy of tolerance of different religions. The Nāyaks supported religion because they seemed to believe that it was their responsibility to promote and safeguard the spiritual and moral welfare of the people.

A number of books refer to the sectarian disputes prevailing in the 17th and 18th centuries, but none of them deals with the issue in detail. R. Sathyanatha Aiyar is of the opinion that

though there were petty disputes among the various sects, they were not serious enough to disturb their (the Nāyaks') harmonious social relations and co-operation for common ends.<sup>18</sup>

It is difficult to know which of the sects were actively involved in disputations and religious rivalries in Southern India during the 17th and 18th centuries. Tāyumānavar frequently refers to the different creeds being involved in challenging and fighting with one another (1.1-2; XIII.10).<sup>19</sup> Although he alludes to religious rivalries in many of his hymns, he does not explicitly tell us about any particular creed actively involved in sectarian conflicts and debates.

Looking at the question from the vantage point of well-known historical documents we realize that in Tamilnadu during the period under consideration there were several schools of thought such as Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism, Advaita Vedānta, Dvaita of Madhva, Buddhism and Jainism, Islam and Christianity. While Islam and Christianity were only recently spreading their tenets, Buddhism and Jainism were fast disappearing from the scene, so that, the major rivals were the different sects of Hinduism in their various manifestations. In the presence of these different religious groups, there could have been sectarian bitterness and rivalry. Such bitterness arises, when followers of a particular creed are so fanatical in championing their tenets that the true spirit of religion is lost. This approach to championing the doctrine of one sect as against another naturally led to the underestimation of the worth of other religions and paved the way for bitterness and rivalry between the sects. When the ruling chiefs of such places, where religious hostility prevailed, took up the cause of one of the sects, this resulted in the development of an even more intense warring spirit and intolerance between the sects. It is in this context that Tāyumānavar asks the question:



...camaya-kōṭikaḷ elām  
 taṇ-teyvam eṇṭeyvam eṇṇēnkum  
 toṭarnt etirvaḷakkiṭavum niṇṇatetu

...

What is that which stands, which makes a million sects  
 continuously contest everywhere crying my God, my God.

(I.I)

A number of references to 'continuous religious contests' (*toṭarntetir vaḷakkiṭavum*) in his hymns direct one to the religious acrimony of his days. Tāyumānavar, being aware of disharmony among religious faiths, tried to find a common ground for the meeting of all the creeds and the transcending of their differences.

The following instances illustrate how religious tensions were being expressed in the region. An example of religious tension was the long standing boundary dispute between the two great and neighbouring temples of Śrīraṅgam (Vaiṣṇavite) and Tiruvānaikkāval (Śaivite).<sup>20</sup> It was a custom that on the Eighth day of the *Paṅkuṇi-uttiram* festival<sup>21</sup> the Raṅganātha image of Śrīraṅgam temple was taken in procession to a *maṇṭapa* in the garden of Tirumaṅgaimaṇṇa on the southern bank of the river Coleroon. On the way towards the garden of Tirumaṅgaimaṇṇa the image of Raṅganātha was also taken to Tiruvānaikkāval, as was the custom, for a washing of the Lord's Feet in *Jambutīrtham* (the tank). It is said that for unknown reasons the Śaivas of Tiruvānaikkāval resisted this old religious practice in 1376 and blocked the procession. This intimidation resulted in hostility between the two religious sects leading to an armed strife between them.<sup>22</sup> The case was taken to the Vijayanagar King and through the royal mediation the dispute was settled by erecting a boundary wall between the Śrīraṅgam and Tiruvānaikkāval temples.

The royal zeal for a religious sect sometimes gave rise to religious rivalry. In an earlier era, the Cola King's preference for Śaivism made the Śaivites believe in the doctrine: *śivāt parataram nāsti* ('there is none greater than Śiva'). The Śaiva sect, being conscious of the royal support had in the 11th century, tried to force Rāmānuja and his followers to subscribe to the superiority of Śaiva religion. Rāmānuja and his followers rejected the



demand of the Śaivites, and Rāmānuja, sensing the danger to his life, left for Mysore. The two ardent followers of Rāmānuja, Periya Nambi and Kūrattālvān, were then taken to the royal court where they represented their *ācārya* and discussed with the king Krimikaṇṭha the supremacy of Viṣṇu. The King did not accept the arguments and tried to compel them to subscribe to *śivāt parataram nāsti* (there is none greater than Śiva). The disciples of Rāmānuja would not accept the King's order and it is said that the Cola King ordered them to be tortured and blinded.<sup>23</sup> This event is said to have taken place during the reign of the Cola King Krimikaṇṭha whom historians have sometimes identified as Kulottunga I (1070-1118 A.D.)<sup>24</sup> and sometimes as Kulottunga II (1133-50 A.D.).

Another instance of the Cola King's<sup>25</sup> zeal for the Śaiva sect creating religious tension between the Śaivites and Vaiṣṇavites was the removal of the Viṣṇu image from the Chidambaram temple. King Kulottunga II (1123-46 A.D.), while renovating the Naṭarāja shrine at Chidambaram, desecrated Viṣṇu by removing the image of god Viṣṇu from the courtyard of the hall of Tillai. This naturally created a kind of religious tension between the two sects.

It is generally said that the time of the Vijayanagar emperors reversed this favouritism, and it was a time of proselytism on behalf of Vaiṣṇavism. An extract from *Prapaṇnāmṛtam* by Anantārya, referred to in the *Sources of Vijayanagar History*,<sup>26</sup> is interesting in this regard. Anantārya boasts that when the Vijayanagar emperor Venkatapati became a disciple of Tatacharya, an ardent Vaiṣṇava missionary, a large number of the King's subjects also became Vaiṣṇavites.

This kind of proselytism was followed by heated disputes at the royal court among the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava teachers. There was one such dispute between Tatacharya (Vaiṣṇavite) and the court poet Appaya Dikshitar (Śaivite) (16th century). In this argument Appaya Dikshitar was victorious and thereby recon-verted many Vaiṣṇavites into their former faith, Śaivism. It is said that this made Tatacharya an enemy of Appaya Dikshitar and the former even plotted to put an end to the latter's life.<sup>27</sup> Another debate between the Vaiṣṇava philosopher Vijayindra Tirtha and the Veera Śaiva Guru of Kumbakonam held at the Kumbakonam *maṭha* lasted eleven days. In this argument

Vijayindra Tirtha was defeated and in accord with the rules of the debate, the defeated Vijayindra became a Veera Śaivite and entered the Veera Śaiva Maṭha at Kumbakonam.<sup>28</sup>

During the reign of Cokkanatha Nayak (1659-82) an Advaitin called Vajrāṅgi was preaching Śaivism in Śrīraṅgam. Srinivasa Desikar (Vaiṣṇavite) was called in for a debate which took place in the garden of *pakṣirāja*, opposite to the *garuṭa* shrine in the Śrīraṅgam temple. Vajrāṅgi was defeated in the debate and the whole group of Śaivites, it is said, was converted to Vaiṣṇavism.<sup>29</sup>

During the reign of Tirumala Nayak (1623-59), Kumara-gurupara, the author of *Irraṭṭaimaṇimalai*<sup>30</sup> and *Maduraikkalam-bakam*,<sup>31</sup> went to different parts of the country conducting disputations with rival sects including Islam.<sup>32</sup> Another poet, Śivaprakāśa, is said to have met Christian missionaries for disputations and is believed to have composed a polemic refuting the Christian creed. The polemic was called *Ēṣumatanirākaraṇam*<sup>33</sup> (Rejection of Christianity).

During the rule of Krishnappa Nayak (1564-72), there arose a dispute on the question of the erection of the image of Viṣṇu in the temple at Chidambaram. Krishnappa Nayak was overseeing the work of reinstalling the image of Viṣṇu, which had been removed centuries earlier by the Śaivites. When the emperor sought to place the temple of Govinda Raja within the great Śaiva Temple of Chidambaram, a problem arose over the question of whether or not it was lawful to place the image of Viṣṇu in the temple at Chidambaram. Despite objections from the interested groups, the Nāyak decreed that the repair of the shrine should proceed and reinstalled the image with all solemnity. The priests of the temple, who were opposed to this, threatened that they were determined to jump down from the top of the *gopuram* of the temple if the image of Viṣṇu were reinstalled. Krishnappa Nayak was unmoved by the threat and the priests climbed up to one of the *gopurams* of the temple and started to cast themselves down while the Nāyak was in the temple. It is said that twenty of the priests died in this way before the Nāyak in anger shot dead two more. The rest went off to different places and the Nāyak accomplished his task.<sup>34</sup>

Besides the disputes between the sects, there were also disputations within each sect. Among Vaiṣṇavas this was primarily



between Teṅgalais and Vaḍagalais.<sup>35</sup> Within Vaṣṇavism there was another discord on the question of expounding the Vaiṣṇava *darśan* (system of thought). The *Pravacana* School (*Śrī Bhāṣya Pravacana*) insisted that everything be based on the *Vedānta Sūtras* with the help of Rāmānuja's commentary (in Sanskrit). The *Draviḍāmnāya Pravacana* School emphasized the study of the 4,000 sacred *prabandhas* of the Ālvārs (in Tamil). Among Śaivas it was between Śaiva Siddhānta and Advaita Vedānta teachers. This philosophical dispute followed the traditional style of refutation. Śaiva Siddhānta *ācāryas* like Aruṇanti in the *SS* and Umāpati in the *Caṅkaṛpa Nirākaraṇam* wrote on the subject using traditional forms of refutation. They presented the Siddhānta position as the only viable and conclusive position and provided a dialectical refutation of Advaita Vedānta and all other schools of thought.

During Tāyumānavar's time disputations and refutations between different sects (for academic interest) appear to have become more intense and to have picked up some of the general atmosphere of political and religious rivalry. This conclusion is derived from reading a few of his hymns such as 1.1; XIII.10 and XIV.3-4<sup>36</sup> where he speaks about the futility of refutation in attaining the goal which is *mukti*. For Tāyumānavar knowledge for the sake of silencing others with fascinating speech will not lead one to *mukti*:

...vellāmal evaraiyum maruttiviṭa vakaivanta  
vittaiy enmutti tarumō. . . (VII.10)

The whole verse (VII.10) shows his dislike of a 'show' of knowledge and denounces the pomp and display of learning. It has already been observed that even in the opening verse (I.1) of the hymns, he alludes to the triviality of this contest between various religions over their exclusive claims to know the One Reality which is beyond all the sects: "What is that which stands, which makes various sects continuously contest for the sake of that Truth which is beyond their reach."

The uselessness of indulging in vain controversy by juggling technical words is depicted in the following verse:

paṇmukac-camayanēṇi paṭaittavarum  
iyāṅkaḷē kaṭavuḷ enṇiṭum



pātakattavarum vāta-tarkkamiṭu  
paṭiṭarun talai vaṇaṅkiṭat  
taṇmukattiḷ uyir varavaḷaikkum. . .

Originators of multifarious sects, (who are so stubborn in their arguments and counter-arguments, that they produced many sects), the unholy ones who claim they are gods (*ahambrahmavādins/aikiyavādins/māyāvādins*) and those who indulge in controversies, bend their heads in your presence. (XIII.10)

Though it is difficult to determine what particular sect or sects he is referring to, we can safely draw three conclusions. First, there was a variety of creeds actively presenting their cases during Tāyumānavar's time. Second, those sects were indulging in controversies, disputes and refutations. Third, those debates and refutations were not considered by him to be helpful for '*civapōkam*' (Skt. *Śivabhōgam*) (XXX.3), '*civānupava*' (Skt. *Śivānubhava*) (VII.10) and attaining the knowledge of Śiva (XXVII.51). On the contrary, he held that God-experience is the axis of truth and this made him try to intuit the essence of different religions and hold that intuitive experience is the centre around which all religions can meet in an atmosphere of harmony.

### 3. Other Formative Factors

The above mentioned political, social and religious conditions of the time left their stamp on the writings of the poet-saint Tāyumānavar. In addition, there are a few other formative factors which influenced the thought, writings and the message of the saint. First and foremost of these factors is his personal religious experience (*śivānubhava*). There are hymns which describe vividly the experiential basis from which he looks at the world (IV.2; VI.1-2 and XI.8-9).<sup>37</sup> His mystical experience verbalized in the above hymns is sufficiently clear for us to postulate that the primary motivation for making known his views on the different religious systems stems from his own vivid religious experience. Other systems provide a place for this kind of experience (*anubhava*), but the basis of their whole system was not exactly *anubhava* or experience itself but rather doctrine and textual interpretation. They kept *anubhava* aside, and debated on other grounds. For Tāyumānavar, however, exegetical and theological

disputes had only secondary importance and *anubhava* was central.

A second factor, which presumably promoted the spirit of reconciliation was his reading and re-reading of the devotional (*stōtra*) literature of the *Nāyanmārs* (6-9 A.D.)<sup>38</sup> as well as the doctrinal (*śāstra*) literature of the preceptors of Śaiva Siddhānta theological tradition (12-16 A.D.).<sup>39</sup> The expression 're-reading' is used to suggest that, his approach to those literary works was not that of a mere follower belonging to the tradition. Using insights from his own religious experience, he was able to perceive the hidden meaning, and its potential, for a true and new understanding present in Śaiva Siddhānta itself. For example the *SS* is the most comprehensive and systematic statement of Śaiva Siddhānta in Tamil. It is presented in two parts: one part in the form of refutation of other systems called *parapakkam* (resembling the *avirōdhādhyāya* of the *Brahma Sūtra*), and a second part called *supakkam*. The second part, which continues the polemical style to some extent, also breathes in many places, a true all-embracing spirit. In the opening verse, for instance, describing the concept of Godhead (*Śivam*) in Śaiva Siddhānta, *SS* speaks of it as "what is the fulcrum of the respective insights of the Six Schools of Religion." At another place, it raises the question of the norm by which to adjudge or adjudicate the truth of religion, when one is confronted by different religions with their mutually conflicting claims to truth. The true religion is one which does not conflict with other faiths and beliefs but 'justly' accommodates everything in the locus of all-embracingness:

ōtu camayaṅkaḷ poruḷ uṇaru nūlkaḷ  
 oṇrōṭ oṇrovvāma luḷapalavu mivaṇṇuḷ  
 yātucama yam poruṇūḷ yātiṅ keṇṇi  
 ṇituvākum matuvalla tenum piṇakka tiṇṇi  
 nītiyināṇ ivaiyellām ōriṭattē kāṇa  
 niṇṇṇatiyāt orucamayam atucamayam poruṇūḷ  
 ātalinaṇ ivaiyellām arumarai yākamattē  
 yaṭaṅkiyitum ava iyiraṇṭum araṇṇatikkiḷ aṭaṅkum

Religions and schools (of thought) and Scripture are many and they disagree with each other. Therefore it is asked which is true religion, which is true school (of thought), which is true

Scripture. The one which does not conflict with other faiths, and the one which justly includes everything in the locus of all-embracingness is the true religion and true school (of thought) and true Scripture. The *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* embody them (above conditions) and they are comprehended under the Divine Feet of Hara. (SS, VIII.13)<sup>40</sup>

It may be noted here that the last line of SS, VIII.13 is a kind of postscript stating that the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* in their generality present such a unifying vision and that these again, in their turn, are only comprehended under the unity of the 'Divine Feet'. What is suggested here is that the ultimate norm for perceiving the essential non-conflicting nature of religions and religious claims must come from the experience of the 'Divine Feet', a picturesque symbol of the Highest *Gnosis* (*parāvidyā*). The spirit of comprehension and inclusion advocated in the above passage is taken up again and even more clearly spelled out by Tāyumānavar:

pōṇakam irukkiṇra cālaitai vēntuva  
 pucittar kirukkum atupōl  
 purutar peṇu tarmāti vētamutaṇ ākamam  
 pukalumati nālāmpayaṇ  
 ṇānanēṇi mukyanēṇi kātci anumana mutal  
 ṇāṇā vitāṅka tērtu  
 nāṇ nān eṇakkuḷaṇ paṭaipuṭai peyart iṭavum  
 nāṅkucā taṇamum ōrtiṭ  
 taṇanēṇiyāṇ cariyāi āti cōpāṇamum  
 aṇupakṣa campupakṣa  
 mām iru vikaṇpamum māyāti cēvaiyum  
 aṇint iraṇṭ oṇreṇnumōr  
 mānata vikarpa maṇa veṇṇu niṇpatu namatu  
 mara peṇṇa parama kuruvē

...

Just as all kinds of menus are served to eat in the dining-hall, in the same way the following are for the benefit of the souls (to attain the final state of *mokṣa*). The *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* lay down *dharma* etc. (*artha*=wealth, *kāma*=pleasure and *mokṣa*=liberation). *Jñāna* (knowledge) is the important path.



The *pramanas* like perception and inference; the four *sādhanas* (spiritual disciplines) and the proper gradational steps beginning with *caryā* are there in order to uproot the mad state of consciousness. Going through them all, you the great teacher instructed me in the difference between *śampupakṣa*<sup>41</sup> and *anupakṣa*,<sup>42</sup> and then revealed the *māyā* nature of this world and completely conquered my confused mind with Thy teaching of the Supreme nature of our tradition which is neither one nor two. (V.5)

His argument is that religion is one in that it provides food for the hungry. Foods, even though varied, he argues, are alike in being delectable to the taste of the hungry. His acceptance of various means for the realization of God, and his positive approach towards differing views are clearly reflected in this hymn which is a concrete example of his re-reading and re-interpretation of the *śāstra* literature in order to wrest the sense of tolerance towards other traditions from it.

A third factor that seems to have contributed to Tāyumānavar's liberal and wider outlook towards different faiths and his passion for unitive experience is the precedent provided by the old Tamil *cittar* (Skt. *Siddhar*) tradition. The *Siddhar* tradition goes back to the great Tirumūlar. Kamil Zvelebil,<sup>43</sup> one of the distinguished historians of Tamil literature, talking about that tradition says:

whenever the 18 *cittar* are enumerated traditionally in Tamil Nadu, one begins with Tirumūlar. Tirumūlar is undoubtedly one of the direct and most influential forerunners of the movement.

Elsewhere the same author in his book on *cittar* (Skt. *Siddhar*) tradition writes:<sup>44</sup>

It is usual among the Tamil Siddhas themselves to regard Tirumūlar as the greatest exponent of Yoga in South India and as the first master of that 'revelation'; reinterpreting the timeless doctrines within the framework of the Tamil language, culture and literature.

Tāyumānavar, in his own situation, was influenced by Tirumūlar's reinterpretation of doctrine. In all his hymns in the section

called *mannaguruvaṇakkam* (Obeisance to the Silent Teacher) (V.1-10), Tāyumānavar concludes every verse with a reference to Tirumūlar. Besides, the inclusion of Tirumūlar among the four saints (the other three are Māṇikkavācakar, Śivakkiyar and Aruṇakirināthar (XIV.31) is enough to show Tāyumānavar's admiration for and acceptance of Tirumūlar. It was Tirumūlar, the early sage of Śaiva Siddhānta, who first used the expression Vedānta-Siddhānta, and strove for a discernment of the common element in the two traditions. There is an entire section of 37 verses in the Eighth *Tantram* of the *Tirumantiram* of Tirumūlar which discourses on the six *antas* ('Ends'). To become truly Śīva is the quintessence of the teaching of Vedānta Siddhānta. All other *antas* are only secondary to it and therefore are vain (*avam*). The only praiseworthy thing for Tirumūlar, therefore, is Vedānta Siddhānta. What Tirumūlar has in mind, here, under Vedānta is the Upaniṣads, and under Siddhānta it is the Śaiva Āgamas. The *Vedānta-Āgama* (Vedānta-Siddhānta) synthesis is one of the central teachings of Tirumūlar.<sup>54</sup>

civamātal vetānta cittāntamāku  
mava mava māku mavvav viraṇṭuñ  
civamāñ catācivaṇ ceytonṇra ṇāṇā  
ṇavamāṇa vetānta ṇānacittāntamē

Becoming Śīva is the goal of Vedānta and Siddhānta. All other goals are secondary to it and are vain. Śīva's exercise of benevolence towards His sentient beings is the (attainment of) unique knowledge of Vedānta and Siddhānta.  
(*Tirumantiram*, 2393)

So it is very likely that Tāyumānavar was aware of this precedent in Tirumūlar and the *Siddhar* group in general, a group, he praises as adepts accomplished in the art of the realization of the harmony of Vedānta and Siddhānta—*vedānta cittānta camara-canan ṇilaiperṇa vittakac cittarkaṇamē* (VII.1-10). It may incidentally be noted that the *Siddhars* are 'iconoclastic' nonconformers, but at the same time 'mystical' in their approach. They reject creeds and rituals and caste pretensions. What is important and enduring for them is the 'mystic experience' and godly life, realizable without the crutches of any scripture or institution.

A fourth feature of Tāyumānavar's thought is the theme of love (*aṇṇu*) (IX.2; XLIII.14) which fascinates him and plays a great part in his mystical poetry and naturally predisposes him in favour of the harmony of religions and the Advaitic union. The theme of love is the celebrated focus of the earliest Tamil Sangam poetry and this is its bequest to subsequent religious and ethical literature throughout the history of Tamil poetry. The theme of love runs through the whole gamut of Śaiva Siddhānta as well. *Tirumantiram*, the text referred to earlier, equates the known experience of love with the unknown experience of Śivam:

aṇṇuñ civamum iraṇṇenpar aṇivilār  
aṇṇē civam āvatārum aṇikilār  
aṇṇē civam āvatārum arintapin  
aṇṇē civamāy amarntiruntārē

The ignorant think that love and Śivam are two. They do not know that love is Śivam. After knowing that love is Śivam they abide in the love which is Śivam.

(*Tirumantiram*, 270)

From the point of view of love Tāyumānavar tries to reinterpret the inclusive attitude of Advaita Vedānta. In this attempt he tries to rediscover the implicit *bhakti* of Advaita by seeing it as the soul's deepest love relationship to God (VI.9; XLIII.278; XLIV.8). This non-dual relation is explained as 'making me Thou' (*ennaitānākkal*, XXXIV.8) and is expressed through love imagery (XLIV: 1-6 and 19). In this love which involves attachment and assimilation (VI.7; XIV.18) Tāyumānavar perceives the true sense of oneness and interprets the doctrine of 'oneness' as a forceful doctrine of grace or *aru!* (I.1; XVIII.68; XXIV.40)—universality of grace.

A final formative factor, which helped shape his thoughtful regard for the integral vision, was his own predilection for the ascetic life, which is intrinsic to the Advaitic awareness. Positive asceticism has a tendency to transcend all social and institutional narrowness, rising above both class and religious rivalry, and thus it usually refrains from the exclusivist approach towards other traditions. It is an exaltation above the level of the average life, which is of necessity subject to religious, social and institu-



tional compartmentalizations. Asceticism, as a way of life includes a truly non-partisan approach to truth. After the call to the ascetic life, Tāyumānavar, although a Śaiva Siddhāntin, felt the impulse for making a careful alliance with Advaita Vedānta, the system which in Hindu culture is the classic legitimizer of the ascetic outlook. This alliance gave him a multiple religious loyalty and focused his mind on the non-partisan approach so characteristic of his work.

The political, social and religious conditions prior to, and during the time of Tāyumānavar, and other formative factors which left a lasting stamp on the thought and writings of the poet-saint were discussed in the preceding pages. The political and social conditions were depressingly violent and confusing, and the disputations and religious rivalries between various sects and sub-sects within Hinduism were the distinctive features of the religious situation of the period. Tāyumānavar being well aware of both the political and religious predicaments of the time stepped on the scene. The poet-saint, having realized the unitive experience in his life, responded to the challenge of the society through his devotional and mystical hymns. The heart of his religious hymns is an invitation to a basic, deep and intuitive unity experience (*advaita anubhava*) where all faiths meet irrespective of their religious diversity: *teyvacapaiyaik kāṇpatarkuc ceravāruñ cakattirē*: Oh people of the world come together to see the Divine Hall that bestows liberation.<sup>46</sup>

## NOTES

1. 'Nāyak' in Sanskrit means a leader or a chief. In Southern India it denotes the hereditary title of certain Telugu castes. In general the term Nāyak means a doer, an agent or a representative. See Bishop R. Caldwell, *op.cit.*, p. 62.

2. A. Krishnaswami, *The Tamil Country Under Vijayanagara* (Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University Historical Series, 1964), pp. 193-94.

3. T. A. Gopinatha Rao, "Vellangudi Plates of Venkatapati-Devamaharaya I: Sakasamvat-1520", *Epigraphica Indica*, XVI (1921-22) p. 320.

4. J. H. Nelson, *The Madura Manual* (1868), p. 87.

5. *Epigraphica Indica*, vv. 46-57, IX (1907-08), p. 341.

6. R. Sewell, *A Forgotten Empire* (London: 1900), pp. 222-31.

7. R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, *Tamilaham in the 17th Century* (Madras: University of Madras, 1956), pp. 30-31. Also see C. K. Srinivasan, *Maratha Rule in the Carnatic* (Annamalai Nagar: Annamalai University, 1945), p. 55.

8. P. Śri, *op.cit.*, p. 65.
9. R. Sewell, *op.cit.*, p. 222.
10. R. Sewell, *The Historical Inscriptions of South India* (Madras: University of Madras Historical Series, No. V, 1932), p. 277. Hereafter this work will be referred as *HISI*.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 279.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 280.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 283.
14. J. Burgess and Natesa Sastri, *Tamil and Sanskrit Inscriptions* (Madras: Madras Archaeological Survey of Southern India, No. 24, 1886), p. 110.
15. J. H. Nelson, *op.cit.*, p. 176.
16. Bishop R. Caldwell, *op.cit.*, p. 62.
17. By J. Bertrand, S. J. in Four volumes. This particular reference is found in Vol. III, p. 50 as translated by and found in R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, *op.cit.*, p. 203.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
19. Some of the other hymns where the Poet-Saint refers to religious acrimony are, XIV.9; XXV.25; XXVI.5; XXVII.2; XXVII.51; XXXVII.1, 8; XLII. 25.
20. Śrīraṅgam is a small town on the outskirts of Tiruchirappalli. The distance between Śrīraṅgam temple and Tiruvānaikāval is only half a mile.
21. For a detailed study on this feast see P. Younger, "Ten Days of Wandering and Romance with Lord Raṅkanāta: The Paṅkuni Festival in Srīrankam Temple, South India" *Modern Asian Studies* 16, 4 (1982), pp. 623-56.
22. The year of this incident is said to be in 1376 A.D. See V. N. Hari Rao, *History of the Śrīraṅgam Temple* (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1976), p. 140.
23. See S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I. V (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p. 45.
24. S. Dasgupta, *Op.cit.*, Vol. III., p. 104.
25. It is often said that the Cola kings extended their patronage to both Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava religions. But when we see events such as the above, we suspect their religious favouritism.
26. S. Krishnaswami Aiyanger, *Sources of Vijayanagar History* (Madras: University of Madras, 1919), p. 251. Also see H. Heras, *Aravidu Dynasty of Vijayanagara*, Vol. 1 (Madras: B. G. Paul & Co., 1927) p. 522.
27. G. R. Subramaniya Pantulu, "Discursive Remarks on the Augustan Age of Telugu Literature", *Indian Antiquary*, XXVII (1898), pp. 322-36. We may also recall here the philosophical contest between Śivāgrayogin and Maṇavāla Mamuni (Vaiṣṇavite). In this contest Maṇavāla Mamuni was invariably defeated by the Śaivite Śivāgrayogin. It is said that the followers of Manvala Mamuni could not bear it and they set fire to Śivāgrayogin's residence.
28. Gopinatha Rao and T. S. Kuppuswami Sastri, "Arivilimangalam Plates of Srīrangaraya II". *Epigraphica Indica*, XII (1913-14), p. 346.
29. According to the Chronicle of Śrīraṅgam Temple (*Koil-Oḷugu*) (p. 188)

the debate lasted for 44 days. See V. N. Hari Rao, *History of the Śrīraṅgam Temple* (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1976), p. 194.

30. It is about the goddess Mīnākṣhi of Madura.

31. It has 102 stanzas praising Chokkaliṅga, Śiva, the deity of Madura and His sports.

32. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *History of India*, 3rd edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 385.

33. *Ibid.*

34. Quoted from the letter of a Missionary, Fr. N. Pimenta, to Fr. C. Squavia as recorded by H. Heras, *op.cit.*, pp. 553-54.

35. A great division occurred among the Vaiṣṇavites on the interpretation of the nature of *prapatti* (self-surrender to God) (See S. Dasgupta, *op.cit.*, Vol. III, p. 374). The term *Prapatti* has various meanings: it is a kind of attachment to God where a devotee conceives of God as the sole saviour; it also means faith that God would protect the soul; appeal to protection; a feeling of one's own limitations; the commonly accepted meaning is "complete self-surrender" all others are means to this goal. See S. Radhakrishnan, *The Vedānta According to Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928), p. 271. This self-surrender to God makes the devotee extremely charitable and friendly to everybody. The *Vaḍagalai School* laid stress on man's part similar to that of the monkey to its little one where the little one has to exert itself to maintain the grip. The *Tengalai School*, who are more directly in the line of succession to *Ālvārs*, emphasized God's grace and maintained the position that all that man has to do is to remain passive, as in the cat and the kitten, where the kitten is passive in the mother's mouth. The nature of the rivalry between these Schools is brought out in the following remark: "Though the leaders themselves were actuated by a spirit of sympathy with one another, yet their followers made much of these little differences in their views and constantly quarrelled with one another, and it is a well-known fact these sectarian quarrels exist even now" S. Dasgupta, *op.cit.*, Vol. III, p. 120. There are a number of differences between the two groups and those usually cited are known as *aṣṭādaśa bhedas* (eighteen differences) like, for instance, the *Vaḍagalai* understands divine grace as co-operative while for the *Tengalai* it is irresistible and what man has to do is to remain passive; the former takes *karma* and *jñāna* as ancillary to *bhakti*; the latter understands each of them as independent. For the *Vaḍagalai prapatti* is an act of winning grace, while the *Tengalai* accepts *prapatti* as an unconditional surrender devoid of any motive. For other differences see N. Jagadeesan, *History of Sri Vaiṣṇavism in the Tamil Country* (Madurai: Koodal Publishers, 1977), pp. 198. For a study on the potent cause of struggle between these two sects see V. Rangacharya, "The Successors of Rāmānuja and the Growth of Sectarianism Among the Sri-Vaiṣṇavas", *Journal of Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, XXIV (1914-15), pp. 102-36.

36. TP., XX.9; XXV.25; XXVI.5; XXVII.II, 51; XXVII.8; XXXVII.1; XLII.25; XLIII.5.

37. TP., XIII.5; XVIII.12; XXI.1-2; XXII.4; XXIII.2; XXIV.2, 12, 14; XXVIII.41, 65-66; XLIII.107, 377 etc.

38. TP., XI.3; XIV.30; XXII.14.



39. TP., XXIII.26; XIV.31; XLV.ii.4-5; XLV.iii.8.

40. Dharmapurādhinam, *Meykaṇṭa Cāttiram* (Dharmapuram: Ādhīnam Publications, 1956), p. 197.

41. With God's help the soul realizes the eternal truths through a *guru*. See TPMV., pp. 108-09.

42. It is the way in which souls reach the state of righteousness by themselves. *Ibid.*

43. Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile of Murugan* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), p. 221. Hereafter referred as *The Smile*.

44. Kamil Zvelebil, *The Poets of the Powers* (London: Rider and Co., 1973), p. 73.

45. *Tirumantiram*, Stanza 2393 as found in Ramana Sastri's Edition, (Madras: The Madras Times Printing & Publishing Co., 1911) p. 505. All references to the *Tirumantiram* will be quoted from this edition.

46. TP., XXX.2.

### CHAPTER III

## THE HYMNS OF TĀYUMĀNAVAR<sup>1</sup>

In the earlier chapters, we have established the probable period of Tāyumānavar, and described the social, political, religious and other factors that influenced his life, thought and writings. This chapter is a synopsis of his hymns which will serve as a help for understanding his religio-philosophical and mystical thinking.

Tāyumānavar has a unique place in the Tamil literary tradition. His style combined simplicity and sweetness.<sup>2</sup> His singularity as a poet-saint is very well expressed in the acclamations he has received as the 'prince among Tamil mystical poets' and 'the psalm singer of Hinduism.'<sup>3</sup> Tāyumānavar is a household name in Tamil Nadu and North Sri Lanka. As a religious and mystic poet, he has few equals in any language. The erudite Sri Lankan Śaiva Siddhānta scholar Sir Ponnambalam Arunachalem has rightly shown the uniqueness of Tāyumānavar that the saint's 'verses imbued with high spiritual experience and of rare metrical beauty and melody, which enjoy a wide popularity in Tamil land, being on the lips of young and old'.<sup>4</sup>

### 1. Structure of the Hymns

The hymns of the saint are divided into Fifty-six sections.<sup>5</sup> Each section contains a number of hymns and the variation in the number of hymns between different sections is very great. For example, while section Forty-three (*Parāparakkaṇṇi*=The Most High Couplet) contains 389 hymns, sections Thirty-two (*Mukamelām*=All Thy Face), Thirty-four (*Taṇṇai*=Thou God), Thirty-five (*Ākkuvai*=The Creator), Thirty-eight (*Akilāṇṭānāyaki*=The Goddess of the Universe) and Thirty-nine (*Periyanāyaki*=The Great Goddess) contain only one hymn each. A glance at the following figures brings out the disproportionate nature of the sections:

Section Number	Name of the Section	Number of Hymns
Forty-three	parāparakkaṇṇi	389
Twenty-eight	uṭalpoyyuravu	83
Twenty-seven	pāyappuli	59

<i>Section Number</i>	<i>Name of the Section</i>	<i>Number of Hymns</i>
Twenty-five	eṇakkeṇacceyal	28
Two	paripūranāṇantam	10
Fifty-two	niṇṇanilai	3
Thirty-two	mukamelām	1
Thirty-four	taṇṇai	1
Thirty-five	ākkuvai	1
Thirty-eight	akilāṇṭanāyaki	1
Thirty-nine	periyānāyaki	1

It is not clear whether Tāyumānavar himself arranged his hymns under these headings or whether his son or disciple, who edited his poems and provided the manuscript material for later publication, organized them thus because they seem to illustrate several different principles: sometimes thematic; sometimes metric; and often the title is simply the opening word of a hymn.

The total number of hymns as found in most of the editions is 1452. In the Puvai Kaliyanasundara Mudaliar edition (1916), however, the total number of hymns is 1451. For reasons best known to him he has left out a hymn from the section *uṭalpo-yuravu* (Attachment To Illusory Body) (XXVIII.63).<sup>6</sup>

The 1452 hymns are rhythmically composed and follow the standard Tamil metres (*yāppu*). The number of lines in various hymns varies according to the metre. The hymns in *akaval* and *vaṇṇam* consist of thirty-eight and twenty-four lines respectively. There are 129 hymns consisting of eight lines each, while 458 hymns have only four lines. The majority of the hymns have only two lines and are called *kaṇṇis* (couplets). There are 863 of these couplets (*kaṇṇis*) which, though short, are well-known for the beautiful way they express the saint's life, philosophical insights, spiritual longings and God-experience.

Tāyumānavar, by following the classical and popular metres (*yāppu*) of Tamil poetry<sup>7</sup> to express his own religious and God-experience, joined a galaxy of other hymnologists in the Tamil literary tradition. The *akam* theme of *Saṅgam* period—the tender and intimate love between the beloved ones—is employed perfectly in Tāyumānavar's *painkiḷikkaṇṇi* (The Green Parrot Couplet) and *āṇaṇṭakkalippu* (The Bliss Festivity) where he depicts the mystical love as a love relation of the individual soul and God. He aligns himself with the great tradition of his saintly predeces-



sors of Tamilnadu with his *bhakti*-evoking and thought-provoking hymns which obviously use the early hymns as an inspiration. He recalls those great saints to do obeisance to them. He calls many of them by name and extols their praises.<sup>8</sup> The saints for whom he has the greatest reverence and appreciation are Tirumūlar, Sambandhar, Sundarar, Appar, Mānikkavācakar, Meykaṇṭār, Umāpati, Paṭṭinattar and Aruṇakirinātar.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Thematic Division of the Hymns

A division of the hymns into types on the basis of themes is difficult. The problem with this type of division is that there is a repetition of the same ideas in various hymns, and there is a mixing up of different themes in a single hymn. Generally speaking, one cannot discern a progression of ideas in the hymns. Nevertheless P. Sourirajan has classified the hymns into three divisions.<sup>10</sup>

The first division, according to Sourirajan, contains sections I-XIV, and this deals primarily about the transcendent nature of God. This division, however, contains many other important themes like the predicament of the soul (IV.3; VIII.1); paths towards the realization of *mukti* (IV.2; V.5; X.8-9; XII.4; XIII.6); realization of the goal (XII.7; XIII.10); and the call for unity and universal religion (I.1; IX.9; X.3; XII.1; XIII.10). The second division, comprising sections XV to XLII, shows the eminence of Śiva. There are many hymns here directly praising Śiva's eminence (XXXI; XXXVII; XXXVIII and XXXIX). In the same division, however, there are a number of hymns depicting the miserable condition of the individual in the world (XVI; XVIII; XXVII; XXXII and XLII). The main thrust of section XIX is the importance of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*. The call for God-experience, and the inexpressibility of that experience are the key-themes of sections XXX, XLI and XLII. The nature of a true devotee is the subject-matter of sections XXXVI and XLI. A folkloric presentation of God and the religious experience are the themes of the third division, which consists of sections XLIII-LVI. There are a number of references to *purāṇic* myths and folk-lore in this part, and these stories are used to communicate the transcendent nature of God and other religious concepts and philosophical ideas. The overall concern of this part, however, which is entirely in the form of *kaṇṇis*

(couplets) is mysticism and religious experience. There are repetitions of some of the themes discussed in the earlier sections, and a very strong longing for God-experience is clearly brought out. Overall this three-fold division of the hymns seems somewhat arbitrary because all of the major themes recur throughout the corpus.

Another way of comprehending the hymns is to describe the important themes found throughout the corpus. *Paraśivavaṇakkam* (Adoration to the Transcendental Śiva), the First Section of three hymns, may be taken as an appropriate preface. The themes of that section are: the transcendence of God, the religious disputes (the situation of the society), and the call to unity. These same themes are taken up again in the concluding sections, namely, the *Akaval* (LV) and *Vaṇṇam* (LVI). The themes of those three sections when set in parallel columns would look as follows:

<i>Paraśivavaṇakkam</i> (I)	<i>Akaval</i> (LV)	<i>Vaṇṇam</i> (LVI)
Transcendence of God	Transcendence of God	Transcendence of God
Fighting of myriads of creeds for possession of the Reality (The situation)	Number of creeds (The situation)	Man's nature (The situation)
Call for searching the One Beyond and its experience which transcends all differences	Call for unity	Call for the experiential Realization

These central themes, thus, systematically presented in the preface and conclusion of the corpus, tie the entire body of his work together.

In the *Paraśivavaṇakkam* (Adoration to the Transcendental Śiva), the poet-saint starts with the transcendence of God and then poses a challenge to the religious leadership of his day by showing the futility of different religious sects fighting among themselves and claiming possession of the Supreme Reality as theirs. To press home his unifying argument, the poet-saint says that Reality is non-dual and that non-dual Reality is above the clashing creeds, and therefore it is futile to fight and argue on the question of who possesses God. The conflicts and divisions

could be harmonized, according to the saint, if non-dual Reality, which is 'unknown to the heart, even while (it) shines in great effulgence in the heart' (*cittamaṛiyātapaṭi cittattil ninṇilaku tiyya tēcōmayam*) (I.3) is known through experience. The true religious search must be a pursuit for the experiential knowledge of the Transcendental Reality. This pursuit will transcend religious sectarianism and eliminate religious acrimony.

All the hymns of Tāyumānavar, when organized in accord with the stated theological concensus, can be seen as expressing the three themes listed in the above column. Essentially he is interested in two questions concerning the nature of Ultimate Reality and its realization. Using his own words we shall formulate the questions as follows: First, while shining in the heart why is Reality unknown to the heart? Secondly, when and how will Reality be known to the heart? The contents of the hymns of Tāyumānavar, can thus be expressed in terms of the following four themes:

1. The Lord is envisioned as Transcendent and Immanent; as *Guru*, Father and Mother, Grace, Śiva and Śakti.

2. The soul is in bondage. The soul being bound by impurities, multiple in kind, is unable to realize the Reality which dwells within the self (first question).

3. Release is by way of initiation, following the paths of devotion, rite, integration and enlightenment and by adhering to the teachings of realized sages and scripture, and, above all by God's grace (second question).

4. God-experience (*anubhava*) transcends all religious differences and it is this intuitive God-experience which can be the meeting point of all religions.

### 3. Concept of God in the Hymns

In the hymns the concept of God is presented as transcendent and immanent. In the opening hymn itself the poet describes the transcendent nature of God by saying that Reality cannot be localized in terms of here and there, and that Reality is beyond the reach of thought and speech (I.1). In its transcendental aspect God has neither discernible attributes nor distinguishing marks. It is beyond cognition and devoid of forms, and is the Intelligence beyond our thought and speech (VI.1; III.1). The Transcendent Reality is devoid of characteristics of form or



formlessness and the Supreme One cannot be defined in terms of birth, death, bondage and lineage (III.5). The Reality beyond our finite comprehension is eternal, has no beginning, middle or end (*āti naṭu antamum illātāy*) (IV.10). The Supreme Being is beyond the reach of the *Vedas* and *Āgamas*, in the sense that He is the Object of the *śāstras* and all other works based on the sacred scriptures. Although the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* praise Him and spread knowledge about Him, they can give only an incomplete idea of the immeasurable fullness beyond all conception (XXIV.18). Being the crown and summit of the *Vedas*, the Absolute transcends the vision alike of the celestials, the seers and the *siddhas* (III.8).

In the section called *Cukavāri* (the Ocean of Joy) the poet-saint concludes each of the twelve hymns with the phrase *cutta-nirkkuṇamāna para-teyvamē parañ-cōtiyē cukavāriyē* (Oh Ocean of joy, oh purely attributeless Absolute Transcendent Brightness) (IX.1-12). The transcendence of God is brought out in a number of other beautiful images. In III.2 the poet calls God 'the One without quality and mark' (*kuṇaṅkuṛi yonṛaṛa*), while in other hymns he sees God as 'the mighty, unspeakable stillness' (*pecāta periya mōṇam*) (III.3). In I.1, God is conceived of as that 'which is beyond the reach of thought and speech' (*maṇavākkiṇil taṭṭāmal niṇṛatu*). God is "ever existent, perfect, interpenetrating Intelligence, beyond the dimensions of length, breadth and height" (*niṇṭa neṭumaiyum akalakkuṛukkuṇ kāṭṭā/niṇṛāi paripūṛaṇa-aṇivāy nittam āki*) (XIV.13). In section IV God is praised as '*ciṇmayāṇanta guru*' (Divine Master of Cognitive Bliss) (IV.1-11). The transcendence of God is clearly brought out in the description of God as 'the Pure Fullness that neither goes nor comes' (*pōkku varavu aṇṇu irukkum cutta pūṛaṇam*) (LIV.18) and by calling God *turiyam*<sup>11</sup> or the 'beyond'. In III.1 God is envisioned as 'the shining flame in the *turiya* state' (*turiyaṇaṭu vūṭirunta periya poru!*) (III.8).

The transcendent nature of God explained in various hymns is nicely summarized in the following hymn:

kūṭtaluṭaṇ piritāl aṇṇu nirttontam āyk  
kuvitaluṭaṇ virital aṇṇuk  
kuṇam aṇṇu varaviṇoṭu pōkkaṇṇu nilaiyāṇa  
kuriyaṇṇu malamum aṇṇu

nāṭutalum aṟṟu mēl kīl naṭuppakkam eṇa  
 naṇṇutalum aṟṟu vintu  
 nātam aṟṟaivakaip pūta pētamum aṟṟu  
 ṇāturuvīn ṇānam aṟṟu  
 vātutalum aṟṟu mēl oṇṟaṟṟiraṇṭ aṟṟu  
 vākkarṟu manamu marṟu  
 mannu paripūraṇac cukavāri taṇṇilē  
 vāymaṭuttuṇṭavacamāy  
 tēṭutalum aṟṟaviṭa-ṇilaiyeṇṟa maṇṇiyē  
 cittāṇṭa mutti-mutalē  
 cirakiri viḷaṅkavaru ṭakṣiṇāmūrttiyē  
 cinmayāṇanta-kuruvē

That which is devoid of union or separation, unattached, knowing no contraction or expansion, having no quality, neither born nor dying, having no permanent mark, knowing no impurity, not outside seeking, neither up nor down, neither side nor centre, neither the *bindu* (the point) nor *nādam* (sound essence), knowing no difference of the five elements, devoid of the distinction of the seer, the seen and the seeing, unflagging, neither one nor two, without words or thought, in that ocean of abiding Bliss and plenitude, Oh Silent Teacher Thou hast taught me to drink with mouthful and become immersed and forefeit even the sense of search. Oh Silent Teacher initiate me into that state of Truth. Oh Thou who are the bestower of *mukti* as prescribed in the Siddhanta. Oh Thou, Lord of the south, shining upon the hill of Siva (Tiruchirappalli). Oh Thou who art the Guru of Consciousness and *ānanda* (Bliss). (IV.8).

In the hymns of Tāyumānavar we also see the transcendent blended with the immanent conception of God. This hyphenated concept is distinctly expressed in the phrase '*ellām āki allāu-māki*' (III.12) (Having become all, and yet becoming nothing). It shows God's presence in everything. Even while he is beyond it, God is in all but all is not God. The immanence and transcendence of God is further presented through the analogies of the vowel and the consonant (*akaravuyir eḷuttāṇaittum āki*) (III.12), oil in the seed (*eḷḷil eṇṇey*) (III.8) and 'fragrance in the flower' (*malarinmaṇam*) (III.8).

akaravuyir eḷuttanaittum āki vērāy  
 amarntateṇa akilāṇṭam aṇaittum ākip  
 pakarvaṇav ellām āki allat ākip  
 paramākie collariya pānmaiyaḱit  
 tukaḷaru-caṅkarpa-vikarpaṅkaḷ ellām  
 tōyāta arivāki cuttam āki  
 nikaril pacu-patiyāna poruḷai nāṭi  
 neṭṭuyirttup pēranpāl niṇaital ceyvām

Let us meditate with our longing expressed in sighs and with great love for that Supreme One which like the vowel 'a' permeates all other letters and yet stands separate; that which becomes all in the universe yet stays beyond the universe; and that which is spoken yet unspoken; and that which is pure and incomparable, the embodiment of knowledge; and that which is unaffected by resolution and dissolution; that which is the Lord of the bound souls. (III.12)

Vowel 'a' is considered in Tamil grammar the primary and first sound a human can utter, and it is thought of as present in every other vowel or consonant. Even in a simple consonant that vowel is implied and understood, and so it is completely identified with the consonant itself. Neither of them is independent. They are connected and inseparable. Likewise the immanent nature of God is in all forms of life—they are inseparable. The same idea is conveyed in the other analogies mentioned above.<sup>12</sup>

Although the transcendent One is devoid of all attributes and beyond name and form, the devotees and the mystics praise God, out of love and devotion, by using manifold names and attributes. Therefore, the poet although a true devotee and mystic fully aware of the transcendence of God, nevertheless calls Him by names which are considered only attributes and descriptions emerging out of the soul's intimate relationship with Reality.

In 1.2 the poet sings that the names of the Supreme One are countless (*pēraṇṇam*). Sections I-XIV are filled with this kind of attributive and descriptive praise of the Divine. In VI.1, for example, he describes God as the One devoid of qualities (*nir-kuṇa*), painless, (*nirāmaya*), self-existent (*nirālampā*), inaccessible to senses (*nirviṣaya*), beyond the universe (*viśvātīta*), ever-full like space (*vyōmaparipūraṇa*), ever-blissful (*catāṇṇa*), Lord of Wisdom (*ñānapakavan*) etc.



Out of love and devotion the poet-saint sees God as absolute purity: *nirviṣaya cuttamāna nirvikāran* (the unextended and unchanging and perfect purity) (I.3). The poet intuitively the Almighty as: *cankarpa vikaṣpaṅkaḷ ellām tōyāta aṟivu āki* (true wisdom untouched by likes or dislikes) (II.12). The mystic poet being convinced of the power and need of Divine Grace (*aruḷ*) calls God '*karunaipravāka aruḷai*' (the flood of beneficent grace) (X.6). The Lord is conceived of as the omnipresent one while the poet sings: *pāl veyyamāyaik/kūraṇaituṅ kaṭantavellaiccetamāki/kuṟaiv aṟaniṇṟiṭum niṟaivē* (Oh Fullness, Omnipresent One, resting beyond the plane of *māyā* which is replete with illusory phenomena and beyond imperfections) (XIV.3). The omnipotence of God is acknowledged and praised in VI.3: *ellāmunuṭaimaiyē/ellāmunuṭaiya ceyale/eṅkaṇum viyāpini* (all are Thy possessions; all are Thy acts; Thou pervade everywhere).

The spiritual experience of Tāyumānavar makes him praise and glorify the Supreme Reality in all possible human ways. In his vision of God as Power he describes God by all familial terms like Father, Mother, Beloved, and by Grace and Light. The vision of God as Father and Mother<sup>13</sup> is found in a number of places.<sup>14</sup> In XXXI.1-2 the saint calls God Father and Mother and the most gracious one who made Himself known also as the mother, Tāyum-āna, in Tiruchirappalli (*śiragiri*):

... toḷavōr uruvilē  
tāyum tantaiyum ānōy cirakirit-  
tāyumāna tayāpara-mūrttiyē

Oh, Gracious Lord Thou emerged in one form as Father and Mother for the whole world to worship. (Oh Lord) Thou also became a Mother (*Tāyumāna*) in Tiruchirappalli. (XXXI.2).

While doing obeisance to God, the poet recalls the love of God and acknowledges that God has raised the poet as a loving mother; *yemmai aṭimaikkā vaḷartteṭutta aṇṇai pōl* (III.11). The poet-saint sees God as the refuge of everyone. Here the God-loving poet says that even if he has evil tendencies in his mind, the motherly love and care of the Supreme will not forsake him: '*pollāta cēyeṇil tāytaḷḷal nītamō*' (IX.3). In XVIII.24 we find a beautiful analogy where the poet prays to God to draw him, as

a magnet draws iron, to the Lord who is also a Mother. In the same section, in hymn 25, the poet-saint calls God Father and Mother: *aṇṇai appaṇeṇ āvi tuṇai* (Mother, Father, Thou art my support) (XVIII.25). The sections *Malaivaḷarkāṭali* (The Mountain-bred Beloved) (XXXVII), *Akilāṇṭanāyakī* (The Goddess of the Universe) (XXXVIII) and *Periyāṇayakī* (The Great Goddess) (XXXIX) exclusively praise God in the figure of Mother, the *śakti* of Śiva which is Śiva Himself in the form of Love and Grace.

In a number of hymns the poet-saint envisions God as the Lord of grace.<sup>15</sup> In manifold ways he expresses the power of the grace of God which is manifested in the universe, in the lives of human beings and in his own life. In the section *Karuṇākarakkaṭavuḷ* (Lord, the Source of Grace) (VI), he calls God '*karuṇākarakkaṭavuḷ*' (VI.1-11) and sees everything as the manifestation of God's benevolent grace (*karuṇai*). In IV.4 he says that it is the divine grace (*aruḷ*) that enabled the poet to approach God. In V.6 the poet-saint acknowledges that as light is the only refuge in the darkness it is the light of grace (*aruḷ tārakam*) that is his refuge in obtaining salvation. The saving power of grace is explained in VIII.6 and XLIII.369.

The poet-saint uses a number of metaphors in order to convey the blessedness and outpouring of the grace. In XLVI.15 he uses *tayai* for grace and compares it to the compassion of a loving mother: *tāyiṇum nalla tayāhuvē*. In XLIV.17, comparing grace to a king, the poet asks whether *aruḷ* as the kind of grace will draw him to God as a magnet draws iron unto it: *kāntam irumpaik kavarnṭiluttā leṇṇa aruḷ/vēntan emaiyiḷuttu mēvuvanō* ... (Will the King of grace draw me unto Him as a magnet draws iron unto it?). The saving power of *aruḷ* is well brought out through the following metaphor of *aruḷ puṇai* (raft of grace):

aracē niṇtirukkaruṇai allāt oṇrai  
ariyāta ciṇiyēṇ nāṇ ataṇāl muttik—  
karai cērumpaṭik uṇaruṭ-puṇaiyaik kūṭṭuṇ  
kaippiṭiyē kaṭaippiṭiyāk-karuttuṭ-kaṇṭēṇ

Oh Lord, I am an ignorant and little one who knows nothing but your holy grace. Therefore I see in my mind that holding unto the saving handle of the raft of your grace can carry me to the shore of *mukti*. (XL.3)

Grace is presented as something to be sought after by the wise and is seen as the end of the *Vedas*... *ariñar/āyumaṛai muṭivāṇa aruḷ*... (the grace for which the wise sages are in quest, and which is the ultimate end of the *Vedas* (VIII.4). There are a number of hymns where the poet explains grace in various ways,<sup>16</sup> but *aruḷ* is always God's benevolent gift (*aruḷ varam*) (XXIV.10), and God is the embodiment of *aruḷ* (*aruḷellām*) (XVIII.68).

The immanent nature of God is further brought to light in the representation of God as Indweller and *Guru*. As an indweller, the Supreme dwells as a king in the heart of the devotee and fights against the evils which lead one into the darkness:

...  
 itayaveḷi-yeñkaṇun taṇṇaracunaṭu cey—  
 tirukkum itaṇoṭ eneramum  
 vāṅkānilāt aṭimai pōrāṭa muṭiyumō

...  
 The Supreme indwells in the heart of the devotee as a saviour who leads the soul ashore through the depths of births and deaths. Can I, the slave, forever fight with it.  
 (V.9)

The indweller is seen as the one who dispels the darkness of all impurities and the one who always invites the soul to the source of Bliss.

uḷḷamē nīṅkā eṇṇai vā-vā veṇṇ—  
 ulappilā āṇaṇtamāṇa  
 veḷḷamē poḷiyuṇ karuṇai-vāṇmukilē  
 veppilāt-taṇṇaruḷ viḷakkē  
 kaḷḷamē tuṇakkun tūveḷip-parappē  
 karuveṇak-kiṭanta pālmayap—  
 paḷḷamē viḷāṭeṇaik-karaiyēṇṇip—  
 pālippat ūṇṇaruḷ paramē

You the Indweller who invites me with whom you stand inseparable. You are the cloud who pours the endless bliss like a torrent. You are the light of grace shedding light without heat. You are the expanse of pure vacuity that dispels the deceit of delusion.  
 (XIX.4)



In the hymns, the poet vividly explains the idea of God-Guru. There are two sections, namely, *Cinmayānaṇṭaguru* (Teacher of Blissful Wisdom) (IV.1-11) and *Maṇḍaguruvaṇakkam* (Obeisance to the Silent Teacher) (V.1-10), which exclusively extol the greatness of God in the person of the *Guru*. In the former, each hymn is addressed to God as the Lord of Blissful Wisdom and all the hymns in the latter conclude with "Oh the Teacher of the mystic word, the Teacher of yogins, the Lord of Silence descended from the sage of Mular's line." While the *Cinmayānaṇṭaguru* section, emphasizes the God-Guru as Teacher of Blissful Wisdom, *Maṇḍaguruvaṇakkam* explains the coming of God into the human environment in the form of a *Guru*.

God-Guru took the human form in order to save the souls from the world of *māyā*. The nature of the *Guru's* involvement in the world and the manner of liberating the soul from the limitations of the world are spelled out in the following hymn:

kāṇ-ariyavallalellān tāne kaṭṭuk-  
kaṭṭāka viḷaiyum ataik kaṭṭotē tān  
viṇiṇiṇ-karppūramalai paṭutippattā  
vintai-yeṇak kāṇavoru vivēkaṇ kāṭṭa  
ūṇuṇakkam iṇpatuṇpam pērūrāti  
ovviṭavum yenaippōla uruvṇkāṭṭik-  
kōṇ aṇavōr māṇkāṭṭi māṇaiyirkkun  
koḷkaiyeṇa aruḷ maunakuruvāy vantu

The innumerable sufferings produce themselves in great number. In order to render them ineffective you arrived showing me the discriminative knowledge that burns the suffering as fire consumes the mountain of camphor. Having taken a human form like me, who has hunger, sleep, pleasure, pain, name and native place, you came as a Silent Teacher. Just as a deer is captured with the help of another deer, you captured me by your grace. (XIV.17)

In the section *Cinmayānaṇṭaguru* (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss), the *Guru* is contemplated and seen as '*cirakiri viḷaṇkavaru dakṣiṇāmūrti*' (*Dakṣiṇāmūrti*, Southern-faced Form, Thy splendour shines on Śiva's hill). *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*, the eternal *Guru*, has manifested Himself on Mount Sira in order to shelter the soul in the bounties of grace and to show the ineffable saving truth (*corūpa*

*anupūti*). The *Guru* is the bestower of *mokṣa*, which is the goal of Siddhānta (*cittānta muttimutal*) (IV.1-10). The *Guru* is meditated upon as a liberator of the soul which is bound by the noose of *pāśa* (bond). The poet says that the *Guru* rushed to save the souls which had fainted due to the clutches of the impurity (IV.3). The poet, in IV.6, sings that the God-*Guru* saved the soul from the dark chamber of *āṇava*, and the cycles of birth and death.

The God-*Guru* is also seen as a revealer. It is the *Guru* who revealed that the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* are one: *vētākamattuṇi piraṇṭillai yonru...* (V.2). The *Guru* is the silent revealer who imparted the knowledge of the path of realization *Śivajñāna: civañāna citti neṇi maunōpatēṣa-kuruvē...* (V.2). It is the *Guru* who disclosed the truth that in order to attain *mokṣa* one must follow the path of *jñāna*. In this sense, the poet considers the way of knowledge (*jñāna-mārga*) to be the superior *mārga* for attaining the goal: *ñānanēṇi mukyanēṇi* (V.5). In V.3 the poet-saint says that it is the *Guru* who imparted the knowledge that the essential and operational character of Vedānta and Siddhānta is *samarasam*, and that this in turn is nothing but *Śivānubhūti*, the experience of Śiva (*vetānta cittānta camaraca civānupūti*) (V.4). This aspect of Tāyumānavar's teachings will be explained later. The '*Cinmayānantaguru*' (The Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) communicated a great truth that beyond all the structured religions remains the *samarasa* state of the soul and it is here the soul enjoys the state of perfect bliss, which is the operational basis for the meeting of all religions (IV.4).

In order to convey the different aspects of the teachings and also the modes of imparting the teaching, the *Guru* is called by different names by the poet-saint. Thus, we have the following names: *cinmayānantaguru* (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) (IV.1-11), *ñānaguru* (Teacher of Wisdom) (V.1-10), *maunaguru* (Teacher of Silence) (V.1-10; XIV.17), *maunōpatēṣaguru* (Teacher of Silent Instruction) (V.2), *mantraguru* (Teacher of Mantras) (V.1-10), *tantraguru* (Teacher of Tantra) (V.1-10), *aruḷguru* (Guru of Grace) (XXXIII.2), *satguru* (Teacher of Truth) (XVIII.25; XIX.6) and *saccitānantaguru* (Teacher of Truth, Consciousness and Bliss) (XIX.8).

The *Guru* is conceived of as Lord Śiva. "Guru with three eyes sat under the banyan tree (VI.1; VI.5; XV.5); *maunaguru* with the matted hair (IX.6); the three-eyed Lord (IX.9); *mauna* Śiva



who taught truth to Śanaka and others (XXVIII.50). All those references to Śiva lead one to conclude that the *Guru* in different forms is the Lord Himself.

Silence (*mauna*), which is always associated with God, is seen as a result of the *Guru* (*maunaguru*) granting that state of spiritual disposition to the devotee as he advances on the way to God-realization. The centrality of *mauna* and its association with the *Guru* is expressed in the following hymn:

cittamauṇi vaṭapālmauṇi namtīpakunṭa  
cuttamauṇi yeṇumūvarukkum toḷumpu ceytu  
cattamauṇamutal mūṇṇu maṇamum tāṇpaṭaittēṇ  
nittamauṇamallāl aṇiyēṇ maṇṇai niṭṭaikaḷē

Having done the devoted service to the three called *citta mauni*, *vaṭapāl mauni* and *cutta mauni* who performs sacrifices (who sat at the fire place), I obtained the primary three-fold silences beginning with *vāk mauna*. I do not know of any other *niṣṭā* (meditation) than eternal silence (*mauna*).  
(XXVII.26)

The above hymn (also XLIII.276) refers to three different *maunis* (who are *gurus*) and the three-fold gifts of *mauna*. The three *maunis* are *citta mauni*, *vaṭapāl mauni*, and *cutta mauni*. The *citta mauni* is the *Guru* in his aspect of seeking and granting grace out of his compassionate love for the souls. He is also called *upadeśa guru* (the Teacher who instructs the disciple).<sup>17</sup> The *vaṭapāl mauni* is the *Guru* signifying *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*, 'sitting under the tree'—the archetypal *guru* who instructs gods and humans alike. The *cutta mauni* in his aspect of *dīkṣāguru* provides instruction and ritually initiates the disciples into the high levels of spiritual realization. The same hymn refers also to the different grades of the *mauna* state, namely, *vāk mauna*, *mana mauna* and *kāya mauna* (word, mind and body silence) which are different stages of attaining the ultimate union with God.

God, according to the conception of Tāyumanavar, as found in the hymns, is a transcendent One. He is also transcendent-immanent as praised and glorified by the devotees and mystics. As a mystic, the poet-saint also sings of the immanent nature of God deriving from *purāṇic* fables and folk-lore. God is described here as one with many anthropomorphic characteristics and



other details. This kind of presentation of God was meant to satisfy the popular religious yearning and make God's presence felt among the common people in a language understandable to them. The poet-saint drew upon many well-known *purāṇic* figures, myths and incidents and presented God in the common man's vocabulary. God is presented as one with long, thick and matted hair, with the Ganges and the moon set on his head. In XXVIII.48 the poet describes God as the one with red-matted hair decorated by the moon (*tiṅkaḷ aṇi ceñṇaṭaiyan*). In another hymn Tāyumānavar portrays God as the one who has the moon, the Ganges, the *konṇai*<sup>18</sup> and *datūra* flowers on His holy head (XVIII.71).

In the *Purāṇa*, Śiva is pictured as the One who is decorated with snakes, and as the one who swallowed the venom as nectar. This picture of Śiva is recalled when the poet-saint describes Śiva as 'one with dark poison in His throat' (*kāḷa kaṇṭamumāy*, XXII.9); 'one with his neck decked with dark poison' *kāṇ pūṭṭa kaṇṭaṇ*, XLV.i.1); 'the Lord who swallowed venom as nectar' (XXI.7); 'the one who is decorated with the red-eyed snakes' (*ceñkaṭ paṇiyāy*, XXVIII.48).

In the hymns there are a number of places where the poet addresses God variously as 'the three-eyed God' (*mukkaṭ pirāṇ*, XVIII.50, 52); 'the three-eyed flaming red gem' (*mukkaṇ māṇikka cōti*, XVIII.53); 'three-eyed fruit' (*mukkaṭ kaṇi*, XL.7; XXVIII.49).

Representation of God as the one who is smeared with ash is common in the *Purāṇas*. Tāyumānavar recalls the same image when he invokes God by praising Him as 'the white ash daubed Lord' (*veṇṇīṟraṇ*, XV.4); and 'the ash worn like fragrant sandal' (*nāru naṇṇānta nīra*, XXI.7). The God of bliss is said to be the one whose body is radiant with the white dust of ashes (*veṇpoṭi pūṭṭa mēṇic cukaporuḷ*, XXVII.7).

The association of God with certain animals is common in *purāṇic*-lore. In XVIII.9 Tāyumānavar presents Śiva as riding on a bull, and in XXVIII.48 the same Śiva is represented as one who has a deer in one of his hands. Hymn XXVIII.24 praises Śiva as the God who wears the tiger's skin (*puliyin aṭaḷuṭaiyāṇ*).

God Śiva, in the *Purāṇas*, is always associated with different kinds of weapons. Tāyumānavar in his hymns introduces God as 'the one with the trident' (*cūlap paṭai uṭaiyāy*, XXVIII.48) and as

‘the Lord wielding the gleaming axe and the deer’ (*tuṅkamaḷu mān uṭaiyāy*, XXVIII.48). In XX.9 the poet calls the Lord ‘red and eight-armed’.

The *Purāṇic* conception of God likewise associates God with various incidents. Those events are retold by the poet-saint in such a way as to show the loving and protecting nature of God. Lord Śiva burning the cities of the enemies (XXVII.55) and swallowing the deadly poison on the occasion of the churning the milky ocean (II.9; XXIII.9; XXIV.31) are among the favourite events showing the protective power of God. Lord Śiva using Mount Meru as the bow at the time of burning the three cities (II.9), kicking the Lord of Death (*Yama*), and granting permanent longevity to Markaṇḍeya (XVIII.17; XXVIII.43; XLIII.128) are examples which convey how dear God is to His people. Consuming *kāma* in the fire of God’s third eye (XXVIII.43) and plucking off one of the heads of Brahmā (XV.3; XXVIII.24, 62) are further examples demonstrating the power and saving nature of God. These *purāṇic* and folk-lore presentations of God in the hymns of Tāyumānavar make it possible for him to communicate with the popular religious mind, while at the same time they help express the poet’s overall philosophical and theological conception of God.

#### 4. Concept of Bondage in the Hymns

The three bonds which enslave the soul are *āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā*. Tāyumānavar elaborately explains in his hymns the various modes in which bondage presents itself and describes them employing the language of his religious tradition, Śaiva Siddhānta, as ‘impurities’ which make the soul finite and ignorant. Speaking of the bonds, Tāyumānavar refers to the primal impurity and asks:

āṇavattōṭ attuvitamāṇapaṭi meyñṇaṇat  
tāṇuvinōṭ attvitañcārunāḷ ennāḷō

When shall I have the inseparable union with the Lord who  
is the true Knowledge just as I am now inseparably united  
with *āṇava mala*. (XLV.xiv.28)

In bondage the soul is in an *advaita* relation with the primal impurity and liberation consists in the realization of a true *advaita* relation with God.

What is spoken of here as primal impurity, is not mere absence of knowledge but a positive principle of darkness whose nature is to hide the Reality from the self. As the 'impurity of darkness' (*iruḷ malam*), it deludes the soul. Its hiding and deluding nature are implied when the poet calls it *pāśa iruḷ* (the bond of darkness, V.1). In IV.6 the poet-saint says that the souls are concealed in the darkness of *āṇava*:

kāriṭṭa āṇavak-karuvaṇaiyil aṇivaṇṇa  
kaṇṇilāk kuḷaviyaippōl

...

In the dark womb of primal impurity, I lie fettered like an ignorant and blind babe... (IV.6)

This primordial impurity is capable of hiding everything from the soul, both itself and everything else:

uṇṇilaiyum eṇṇilaiyum oruṇilaiyeṇakkiṭant  
uḷariṭum avattaiyāki  
uruvutān kāṭṭāta āṇavamum oḷikaṇṭ  
oḷikiṇṇa iruḷeṇṇavē  
tan nilaimai kāttātoruṅka...

The impurity of darkness that does not reveal its form, but causes the ignorant condition of perceiving Thy nature and my nature as identical, like darkness that is dispelled at seeing light, may be retracted without showing forth its nature... (X.11)

As a positive principle of darkness it permeates all bodily and mental organs and generates through them the limiting evils like passion, lust, covetousness, sufferings, likes and dislikes, pride, attachment etc. (IV.3). Its removal is made possible when the souls are led to higher stages of spiritual advancement, and in the state of *mukti* the power of darkness is completely uprooted.

puṇṇmalattaiccernt malapōtam poruntutal pōy  
niṇṇmalattaiccernt mala-niṇkunāl eṇṇālō

Association with deceitful impurities gives one *mala*-consciousness. When will I merge with Thy Pure (*nirmala*) state, so as to be released from my impurity? (XLV.vi.17)



The other bond co-existing with the primary one in the eternal soul is *karma*. The poet-saint states that God fettered him with the bond of *karma*: *intappāril paṭarntavinait/taṭaiyāl taṭaiyiṭtu. . .* In this world binding me with the blockage of *karma* (XXVII. 55). Being aware of the evil consequences of *karma*, the saint asks why the Supreme One planted the 'I'-ness and burdened him with the body of flesh and blood and governed the soul by the immutable law of good and evil:

nāṇāṇ inkeṇum akantai eṇakkēṇvaittāy  
nalviṇai tīviṇai eṇavē naṭuvēṇāṭṭi  
ūṇārum uṭalcumai eṇmīteṇvaittāy  
uyireṇavum eṇṇaiyoṇṇā ullēṇvaittāy

...

Why did you place the pride of self-assertion which reiterates 'I-ness'? Why did you make me in the process, and carry the burden of this flesh-filled body which circles around good and evil actions? Why did you give me within this body, as you name it, life? (XVI.5)

There are many hymns where the poet-saint laments the evil consequence of *karma*. It consists of the evil of self-ignorance:

eṇṇaiyiṇṇa teṇṇariyā ēṭaikkuṇ ākeṭuvēṇ  
muṇṇaviṇai kūṭal muṇṇaiyō parāparemē

Is it proper that the previous *karmas* associate with me, the helpless one who does not know myself? Oh Supreme One I am ruined. (XLI.162)

The soul under the spell of *karma* is directed towards desire, cycles of birth and death (XXXVI.5; XLIV.29). In XXVII.38 and XXIV.47 the saint laments *karma* as it causes countless births with never-ending burdens. *Karma* makes the soul a slave of this life (XI.8) and a beast of burden (XX.10). Consequently the soul experiences pain and pleasure and is subject to the wearing cycles of births and deaths.

Being co-existent with the eternal souls, *karma* induces the souls to act through the body, mind and speech. It acts in order to enjoy, and enjoys in order to act. Through actions, the souls accumulate the merits or demerits (*punya* or *pāpa*) of these deeds. With reference to the fruits of deeds, the poet speaks of two kinds of *karma* (*iruvīṇai*, XII.2; XVI.2; XLI. 160, 164). The

two-fold *karmas* are *nalviṇai* (good *karma*) and *tīviṇai* (evil *karma*) (XVI.5). When the soul does any act for good (*nalviṇai*) or bad (*tīviṇai*) in any egoistic spirit, it has got to reap the fruits of such an act whether good or bad. Good deeds (*nalviṇai*) as well as bad deeds (*tīviṇai*) are the source of re-births.

*Karma*, understood as the deed and fruit of manifold deeds, is classified into three according to the time of its fructification. Tāyumānavar refers to them as the 'three mires': (XLV.6.21)

cañcitamē yāti carakkāṇa mucceṅṇum  
ventaporiyāka aruḷ mēvunāl ennālō

When will be the day when the three mire-like accumulations of *karma*, beginning with *sañcitam*, will be burnt up by Thy grace? (XLV.vi.21)

Tāyumānavar also specifies the nature of the 'three' modes in which the bond *karma* functions:

eṇṇē nānpīraṇtuḷala vantavāṅṇiṅk  
eṇakkena ōrceyal ilaiyē ēlaiyēṇpāl  
muṇṇēceyviṇai eṇavum piṇṇēvantu  
mūḷumviṇai eṇavum varamuṇaiyēṇ entāy

How come I have been born and made to suffer here in this world? I do not have any action of my own. Is it, then, proper for actions done earlier and actions accruing in the future (for fruition) come to me, the poor one, Oh my Lord. (XLII.27)

Tāyumānavar here refers to the accrual in the future of *karmas*, which is technically called *āgāmiyam*. *Sañcitam* is the accumulated *karma* of the former births. It is the *karma* which is carried forward from the time when a deed is done, to the time when the fruit of that deed is experienced:

tollaiviṇaik iṭāy cuḷalkiṇṇa nāṇoruvāṇ  
ellaiyilā niṇkaruṇai eytuvanō-vallvaṇām  
mōṇakuruvē muḷutinaiyun tānuṇarnta  
ñāṇakuruvē navil

In accordance with my old *karma* I am distressed in mind (revolve through successive births). Will I be able to attain your boundless grace? Tell me Oh, Silent Teacher; Oh, Teacher of Wisdom who has realized all that is to be realized. (XXVIII.30)

*Prārabdham* is the functioning of *sañcitam* in the present birth (XLII.27; XLIII.162). The work of these three-fold *karmas* is cyclic in its fructification. Enjoyment, or suffering which the soul experiences as a result of past actions in the form of *prārabdham* becomes the source of fresh acts, which are called *āgāmiyam*.

The soul which always longs for freedom and spiritual tranquillity is enslaved by the bond of *karma*. The aim of the soul, therefore, is always to get rid of the intolerable misery, birth and death, coming in quick and never-ending succession, caused by *karma* which is as expansive as oceans and as huge as mountains:

kaṭalettanaṭai malai ettaṇai attanaṭai kaṇmamataṭk  
uṭalettanaṭai attanaṭai kaṭal nūṇmaṇal okkum inta  
caṭalattai nāṇ viṭumunṇē uṇaivantucāra yiruḷ-  
paṭalattai māṇṇappaṭātō niṇainta parāparamē

The *karma* is as expansive as the ocean and as huge as a mountain. How many are the bodies that are taken due to this *karma*? To count them is as fruitless as counting the fine grains of sand in the ocean. Therefore, before I depart from this body, will you not remove the veil of darkness so that I can reach you, Oh Supreme Omnipresent One.

(XXVII.38)

The poet-saint being anxious to attain *mukti* looks forward to the day when the evil of *karma* will be overcome:

paṇkūḷviṇai tāṇ paṭucāviyākavema  
keṇkōṇkiranaveyil eytuṇaḷ ennāḷō

When will be the day, when the rays of grace of our Lord will be discharged upon us in order to dry up the accumulated crops of *karma*?

(XLV.vi.19)

kuṇṭṭavitaṁmāṭiyāl kūṭumviṇai ellām  
vaṇṭṭavittāṁvāṇṇam aruḷ vantaṭṭuṇaḷ ennāḷō

When will be the day of the arrival of the grace to grill the seeds of stored actions caused by mind, speech and body (the agents of thinking)?

(XLV. vi.20)

In addition to the aforementioned bonds, Tāyumānavar also speaks of the bond of *māyā*. This non-intelligent, primordial matter serving as the material cause for the cosmic evolution is



described in various ways by him in order to express its veiling power (V.3). The all pervasive *māyic* control (*akilamāyai*) which represses the mind and the world are seen in expressions such as '*manamāyai*' (*māyā* which deludes the mind, IX.9; X.3; XI.4, XIX.7); '*māyai caṭam*' (*māyā* which makes the unreal body as real, XXVII.32; XXI.9); '*māyaip perum paṭai*' (*māyā* the great army, XXVII.1); '*māyā cakam*' (*māyā* the world); '*pāl veyya māyai*' (useless and scorching *māyā*, XIV.3); '*maikāṭṭu māyai*' (*māyā* which shows darkness, XLIII.330).

There are, thus, multiple bonds at work in enslaving the souls. They hide and veil the truth from the souls. These binding impurities (*mala-s*), however, are removable and when the souls become mature and pure those bonds disappear from the souls. The process involved in the maturing of the bonds and of the bound soul, the descent of grace etc. are themes which are elaborated in accord with the theology of Śaiva Siddhānta. These questions will be discussed later.

## 5. Concept of Soul in the Hymns

Another theme, we find in the hymns is the portrayal of the human soul. There are several hymns showing the existence of countless numbers of human souls, each being without beginning and distinct from the psycho-physical organism. This distinctiveness of the soul is seen to differentiate the soul from the body, senses, mind and the like. In LIV.9 the poet-saint tells us what the soul is not. The soul is not the five elements,<sup>19</sup> nor the sense organs.<sup>20</sup> The soul is neither the organs of action<sup>21</sup> nor the inner organs:<sup>22</sup>

pārātipūtani yallai-uṇṇip  
pār intiriyaṅ-karaṇa niyallai  
yārāyunaṛvu niēṇṛaṇ. . .

You are not the five elements beginning with the earth. Reflect carefully, you are not the *indriyas* and *karaṇas* (organs of action, perception and intellectual organs). You are the consciousness that thus reflects, said He. (LIV.9)<sup>23</sup>

The hymns also show the two important features of the soul. First, the soul never stands alone by itself. Its existence is always in association or relationship with either the world or God.

Second, the soul assumes the nature of that with which it associates. That is to say, its essence lies in its identification, whether it is in identification with the world, causing delusion, or with Pure Spirit which means liberation. This is brought out in the simile of the crystal and the objects adjacent to it:

vant eṇuṭalporuḷāvi mūṇrum taṇkai  
vacameṇavē attuvāmārkka nōkki  
aintupulaṇ aimpūtam karaṇamāti  
aṭuttakuṇam attaṇaiyum allaiyallai  
intavuṭal aṇivaṇiyāmaiye nīyallai  
yātonṇupaṇṇi ataniyalpāy niṇṇu  
pantamaṇum paḷiṇkaṇaiya cittuniṇ  
pakkuvaṇkaṇṇi aṇivikkum pāṇmaiye yām

You are not those *guṇas* that are associated with five elements and five organs. You are not that one who looks forward to the six-fold *adhvas*<sup>24</sup> (pathways). You are not the one who controls the body, substance and soul. You are neither the knowledge nor the ignorance nor the body. You are the *Cit* that resembles the crystal which takes on the nature of the thing with which it associates. I am the one who knows at the right moment of your maturity and instruction. (XIV.18)

As the object, which comes into contact with the crystal, determines the colour of the crystal, the self becomes one with the thing with which it dwells. Thus, the soul could be associated either with the world, or with God. In this respect the soul as *cit* stands distinct from God who is also *Cit*. The latter is the one who provides the appropriate instruction to redeem the soul from its bondage.

Because the soul partakes of the things with which it happens to associate, the souls are said to be either *sat* or *asat*:

aṇiyāmai cāṇi atuvāy aṇivām  
neṇiyāṇa pōtatuvāy niṇṇu kuṇi yāl  
cat acat aruḷuṇartta tāṇuṇarāṇiṇṇa  
vitamuṇṇi aṇivenumpērmey

When it is associated with ignorance, it becomes ignorant:  
When it is associated with the state of knowledge it exists

as knowledge. When Grace thus makes it know, it knows *sat* and *asat*. This is its true nature as knowledge. (XXVIII.22)

The soul is conceived of and presented in the hymns as a conscious self passing through different stages of consciousness (*avasthās*). In the section XXIV:25-26 Tāyumānavar speaks about different stages of consciousness (*avasthās*)<sup>25</sup>, namely, the *iāgra* (self-consciousness), *svapna* (dreamy consciousness), *suṣupti* (sub-consciousness), *turiya* (pure consciousness) and *turiyātita* (cosmic consciousness). The final state is the *turiyātita* state where the soul attains the feet of God and is one with God. The poet says that mature souls understand the nature of each stage of consciousness and they conduct themselves accordingly:

cākkiramā nūtalīṇil intiriyam pattum  
cattāti vacaṇāti vāyupattum  
nīkkamil antakkaraṇam puruṭaṇōṭu  
naṇṇa muppāṇaintu nilavum kaṇṭat  
tākkiya copaaṇmataṇil vāyupattum  
aṭuttāṇa cattāti vacaṇāti yāka  
nōkku karaṇam puruṭaṇuṭaṇē cūṭa  
nūvalvarirupattaintā nūṇṇiyōrē

The persons of penetrating knowledge will say that in my forehead is the wakeful state with 35 *tattvas*: the 10 *indriya-s*,<sup>26</sup> the 10 *viśaya-s*<sup>27</sup> beginning with *śabda*, *vacana* etc., the 10 *vāyu-s* (vital airs like *prāṇa*, *apāna*, *vyāna*, *udāna* etc.) and the inseparable four *antaḥkaraṇa-s*<sup>28</sup> which function with *puruṣa*. (XXIV.25)

The next verse explains the other *avasthās* of the soul:

cuḷitti itayantanil pirāṇaṇ cittam  
collariya puruṭaṇuṭaṇ mūṇṇratākum  
vaḷuttiyā nāpiyil turiyam pirāṇaṇōṭu  
maṇṇu puruṭaṇuṇ kūṭa vayanāṇkāṇṇikūm  
aḷuttiṭum mūlantaṇṇil turīyātītam  
ataṇṇītaiyē puruṭaṇōṇṇi amarum ṇāṇam  
paḷuttiṭum pakkuvar aṇivar avattai aintil  
pāṇkuperā karuviniṇṇikūm paricutāne

In the heart which is the abode of *suṣupti* there are the



*prāṇa*, *citta* and the inseparable *puruṣa*. The navel is the abode of *turiyāvasthā* where *prāṇa* and *puruṣa* shine together. *Turiyāttam* is in the *mulādhāraṁ* where *puruṣa* alone is seated with power. The mature people on whom *jñāna* has ripened will know the nature of the organs in the five *avasthās* and they will conduct themselves in terms of those *avasthās*. (XXIV.26)

The state beyond *turiya* (the fourth) is *turiyātita*, the state of consciousness, which is a state of pure Divine consciousness. In this state, the soul enters into conscious experience of oneness with God.

Another characteristic of the soul as found in the hymns is the soul's longing for liberation. This is interiorized in the form of the yearning of the saint's soul and is expressed throughout the hymns.<sup>29</sup> The whole section of XLV.vi.1-8 is a desperate longing for the knowledge of the true self. In one of the hymns, he asks, "When will we know our selves instantly through grace, giving up the foolish idea that the three *guṇas* are the soul?" (XLV.vii.1). In the same section, in hymn three, the poet sings "when would we perceive that our souls are the embodiment of *cit* and that they carry the impermanent physical body which is controlled by the *tattvas*?" The nature of that union with God is described in the expression '*camattunilai*' (equalling state).<sup>30</sup> The *camattunilai* is a state of union between God and the soul which is characterized as a state devoid of the difference between the one and the two (*onṛiraṇṭu miḷḷatuvāy*) and it is also a state which retains the difference between the one and the two (*onṛiraṇṭu miḷḷatuvāy*). The unique nature of this oneness will be discussed later in Chapter Six of this work.

The attainment of *mukti* (liberation) is seen as a passage or crossing from one state to the other. The soul, as we find in the hymns, passes through three stages, namely, *kevalāvasthā* (XLV.vi.25; XIV.30; XXIV.15), *sakalāvasthā* (XIV.30; XVI.2; XXIV.15; XLV.vi.25) and *suddhāvasthā* (XLV.vi.27). In the *kevalāvasthā* the soul is fully enveloped in the darkness of *āṇava mala* under which the inherent powers of the soul like intellect, will and emotion are kept inactive. In the *sakalāvasthā*, the souls on account of God's grace take suitable bodies and are involved in different activities in various environments. In the *suddhāvas-*

*thā*, all the binding bonds of the soul are shattered once and for all and the soul attains freedom which is eternal bliss. This is, as it will be shown later, a straightforward narration of the doctrine of Śaiva Siddhānta.

## 6. Liberation from Bondage

The souls, bound by impurities, are not left in darkness unredeemed forever. Liberation from this bound state of the soul is possible. The pathway to the ultimate goal starts with the divine act of initiation (*dīkṣā*) by a *guru*. *Dīkṣā*, as a spiritual discipline, is to scorch the force of the *malas* (*kaṣṭiyate paśubhāvanā*) and free the soul from their grip, thereby conferring on the disciple the vision and bliss of *jñāna* (*dhiyate vimalam jñānam*). In the hymns V.2 and V.5 the poet discusses different *dīkṣās*. Through *samaya dīkṣā* the *guru* initiates the aspirant into the religious life, making him fit for observing the disciplines in order to purify the body, mind and soul. In V.2 the poet refers to the *viśeṣa dīkṣā* by which the *guru* mentally advances the disciple to do *kriyā* and *yoga*; to perform Śiva *pūjā* (worship of Śiva), to study the *Śivāgamas* and to enter into *yoga mārga*. Through *nirvāṇa dīkṣā* the *guru* makes the thoughts, words and deeds of the disciples spotless and pure and thus qualifies the disciple for directly receiving wisdom (*jñāna*).

Once thus initiated, the four main paths of devotion, rite, yogic integration, and enlightenment are undertaken by the seeking soul. These paths are four stages in the spiritual evolution of the soul. These stages are beautifully expressed by comparing them to the bud, the flower, the unripened fruit and fully ripened fruit, respectively, on the way to spiritual realization:

virumpuñ cariyai mutal meynāṇa nāṅkum  
arumpumalar kāykanipōl aṅrō parāparamē

Oh Most High (the Beginning and the End) the practices of *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna* are like the bud, flower, unripened fruit and ripened fruit. (XLIII.157)

Tāyumanāvar elaborately explains each *mārga*. In *caryā*, as it is explained in the *Śaivāgamas*, the devotee becomes involved in the ordinary religious duties such as cleaning the temple premises, gathering flowers and making garlands for the image of the Lord, lighting the lamps etc. Through these external services, the



devotee attains *Śiva-lōka* (the abode of Śiva). The spirit of this mode of devotion is recaptured by Tāyumānavar in the form of devotion to devotees of God.

an̄parpaṇi ceyyaveṇai ālākki viṭṭuviṭṭāl  
in̄panilai tāṇēvanteytum parāparamē

Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End) if you grant me the eagerness to serve the devotees, the state of bliss will come upon me of its own accord. (XLIII.155)<sup>31</sup>

In this hymn the poet-saint claims that he can have the blissful experience of God by serving others. The performing of charitable works to God's devotees (*an̄par paṇi*) gives the saint the state of bliss (*in̄panilai*). This is *jñāna* in *caryā*—the experience of the Lord in and through the performance of ordinary duties dedicated to God. In the mode of rite the devotee performs worship to the forms of Śiva and sings Śiva's praises and does the daily fire-rites. Through these acts, acts of worship performed to God, the devotee establishes a sense of intimacy with God, and experiences the joy of living in proximity to Śiva. Tāyumānavar's description of this mode is as follows:

neñcakamē kōyil niṇaive cukantam an̄pē  
mañcaṇanir pūcai koḷlavārāy parāparamē

My mind is the temple, my thought is the fragrance (offertory) for worship and my love is the water for ablution. Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End) would Thou come and accept my offering. (XLIII.151)<sup>32</sup>

The external acts done so far with the right intention and spirit prepare the devotee for meditation and internal worship. In the *yoga* state the relation of the devotee to God is closer through meditation and there are many hymns where the poet-saint extols the path of *yoga* giving details about *yoga* postures (*yogāsanas*) and the eventual attaining of mastery over the body and achieving spiritual intimacy:

kālpiṭṭu mūlakkaṇalai matimaṇṭalattin  
mēleḷuppil tēkamviḷumō parāparamē

Oh Supreme One (the Beginning and the End), will the body fall down (will there be death) for the *yogi* who arrests air within (*prāṇāyāma*), who arouses fire at the base (arouse



*kuṇḍalinī*) and makes *kuṇḍalinī* reach the *sahasrāra*, above the forehead (*chandramaṇḍala*).<sup>33</sup> (XLIII.153)

*Kuṇḍalinī*, (that which remains coiled), the serpent power, is described as the supreme consciousness. Passing through various steps of *yoga*, one is able to cultivate mental concentration and finally the *yogi* through undisturbed concentration attain Oneness with the Supreme. Realization of Oneness by way of *yoga* makes Tāyumānavar praise and glorify the *yoga* path:

vaṭṭamitt oḷir pirāṇavāyuvēṇu  
nikaḷamōtu kamaṇam ceyum  
manameṇum periya mattayāṇaiyai eṇ  
vacam aṭakkin mummaṇṭalatt  
iṭṭamuṟra vaḷa rācayōkam ivāṇ  
yōkameṇṇi aṟiṇarpukaḷavē  
ēḷaiyēn ulakil niṭuvāḷvaṇ iṇi  
iṇkitarkum aṇumāṇamō  
paṭṭavarttanar parāvu cakratara  
pākyamāṇa cukayōkamum  
pārakāviya kavitva-nāṇmaṇai  
parāyaṇaṇṇcey matiyūkamum  
aṭṭacittiyuna laṇparukkaruḷa  
virutukaṭṭiya poṇ aṇṇamē  
aṇṭakōṭi pukaḷ kāvai vāḷum aki-  
lāṇṭanāyaki yeṇ ammaiye

If I, the poor one, am able to control the mad elephant-like mind which is enchained by the shining and circling vital breath, then the learned will praise my achievement as the result of the praise-worthy *Rājayoga* which is most desirous in all the three worlds. Thus praised, I will live for long. What, then, is the proof for this? You are the golden Swan who had resolved to grant the dear devotees the gift of auspiciousness (*cakratara pākya*) which is praised by all kings; the poetic ability of composing great epics; the sharpness of mind which is capable of reciting the four *Vedas* in their entirety; the Eight Great *Siddhis*;<sup>34</sup> You are praised by the whole world, Oh Cosmic Goddess (*akilāṇṭa-nāyaki*), who resides in Tiruvānikka. (XXXVIII.1)

The greatness of the *yoga* path is reiterated here. It is this path that helps one to control the wild-elephant-like mind (*maṇame-  
ṇum periya matta yāṇai*) and grants one the fitness for God-realization. This is the reason why Tāyumānavar praises the glorious path of *yoga*.

The culmination of these various paths is *jñāna* which is called *sanmārga* for it takes the soul straight to *Sat* which is God. The superiority of this *mārga* is clearly spelled out in many places in the hymns. In XXVI.3 the poet-saint says that *caryā*, *kriyā* and *yoga* are only preparatory and are superseded by *jñāna*: *patamū-  
nruṅ kaṭantavarkku mēlāna ṇānapāta*. . . Here, *patamūnru* refers to the above three paths and the respective stages of spiritual advancement. The path of *jñāna* leads the soul to the final state of *śivasāyūjya* where the soul attains supreme release and is one with Śiva.

The excellence of the *jñāna mārga* (path of knowledge) is emphasized when he sees *jñāna* as the only path for the attainment of *mukti*:

pattineṇi nilainiṇṇum navakaṇṭa pūmip-  
parappai valamākavantum  
paravai yiṭai mūḷkiyum natikaḷiṭai mūḷkiyum  
pacitākam inṇi eḷunā—  
mattiyyiṭainiṇṇum utir caruku puṇalvāyuvaiṇai  
vaṇṇpaci taṇakkaṭaittu  
maunattiruntum uyarmalai nuḷaitani lpukkum  
maṇṇu tacanāṭimuṇṇum  
cutticeytum mūlaprāṇanōt aṅkiyeic  
cōmavaṭṭatt aṭaittum  
collariya amutuṇṇum aṇṇpavuṭal kaṇṇaṅkaḷ-  
ṭōṇum nilainiṇṇa viṇu  
citticeytum ṇāṇamalatu katikūṭumō  
cittānta muttimutale  
cirakiri viḷaṅkavaru takṣinā mūrttiyē  
cinmayāṇaṇṭa kuruvē

Can one attain *mokṣa* without *jñāna* even if one follows the path of devotion or circumambulating this vast world of nine divisions or even if one takes a holy bath in the ocean and in different rivers, or survives without eating or drinking in the centre of fire, or remains silent by feeding on dry leaves, water and air, or by withdrawing oneself into the

caves of high mountains, or cleansing the ten *nāḍis* (10 principal nerves), or by elevating a fire with one's breath into the orb of the moon, or by drinking the nectar, or by attaining great *siddhis* in order to sustain the body for ages? (IV.11)

Liberation, according to the saint, is guaranteed by *jñāna*:

kaṇmaneri tappiṇ kaṭunarakeṇ renṇālum  
naṇmaitarum ṇānaneri nāmaṇaivat ennāḷō

Faltering from the path of *karma* leads to severe hell. The path of knowledge always grants the Good. When will I embrace this path. (XLV. xv.1)

In one place the poet calls this superior path the “*oru col mārkkam*” (the path of one word) (XLV.xv.3). *Jñāna* annihilates all the *malas* and leads the soul to *mukti*. The power of *jñāna* in exterminating the bonds (*pāśas*) is effectively spelled out in metaphorical expressions, such as ‘*ñānak kaṇal*’ (the spark of knowledge) (IV.7), and ‘*ñānākni*’ (Skt. *jñānāgni*) (the fire of knowledge, XLV. xv.11). *Jñāna mārga* then is the direct and immediate means for attaining the Highest end (V.5).

The bondage caused by multiple bonds is now broken and the soul is matured (*malaparipākam*) (IV.7) by passing through different paths (*sādhanās*). The soul on the way to its God-realization adheres also to the Scriptures (XIX.1-3), to the lives and teachings of the realized souls (XLV.ii and iii), to the performance of *dāna*, *tapas* and *dharma* (XLIII.157-58), to the chanting of the *pañcākṣara* (*na ma si va ya*) (V.8: *maṇimantra*) and the practice of *śivōhambhāvanā* (meditation of identity with Śiva) for the total liberation from all the impurities (*malas*). According to Tāyumānavar, attainment of the Supreme goal without Grace is as unlikely as a man searching for a lost elephant inside a pot, or a man crying for the possession of the moon in the sky (IV.2). The soul fulfils all the above conditions, and then finally blessed by the benevolent grace of God (IV.4; VIII.6; XI.8; XXV.13; XXVII.5; XXXI.2; XLVI.15 etc.), it experiences the Supreme Reality (IX.11) as *nirmala* (pure), changeless, beginningless, devoid of qualities, forms and *tattvas* (IV.8).

In this state, the liberated soul (*mukta*) experiences its state of realization of ‘non-duality’ with God (X.3). The poet calls this



the state of God-soul relation *attuvita niccaya corūpa cākṣātkāra anupūti* (immutable bliss of the true unitive nature) (VI.1), *śivānupūti* (Blissful experience of Śiva) (V.4), *attuvita anupava* (unity experience) (XXVI.7), *cācuvata muttinilai* (state of eternal liberation) (X.5), *śivasāyūjya mutti* (unity with Śiva) XI.3; XII.2, 7), *nirvikalpa samādhi* (indeterminate absorption) (XLIII.51, 245, 327, 352), *siddhānta muttimutal* (the final state of Divine Bliss) (IV.1-11), *śivamayam* (likeness of Śiva) (XXVIII.65-66) etc.

It is within the framework at once of Vedānta and Śaiva Siddhānta philosophy that the depth of Reality is seen in the above description of the final state of liberation (*mukti*). In XLIII.359 the poet-saint says that only realization of Reality as both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa* is real insight. Such was indeed his insight. He says that he intuited the truth as it is and instantly his deceptive mind disappeared. His analysis of various categories (*tattvas*) and other philosophical concepts, and his critical reasoning makes one see in him at work the mind of a reflective philosopher (X.2-3). His critical thinking is seen particularly in section XV *Tēnmukam* (The Honey Face) where the poet defends his position on Reality as against the Buddhists, materialists and other schools. His critical reflection is crucial to his refutation of the *ekātmavādin's* (The Absolutist's position) view on the final relation between God and soul (XIII.10; XLIII.103; XLV. xv.7).

Tāyumanavar, however, is more a religious mystic than a philosopher. A mystic's longing for union with the Supreme God is beautifully shown in XLV.x.1-14 and XLV. xi. 1ff). The mystic's description of God, speaking out of his own personal experience, is always exuberant and refreshing as may be seen in many hymns (XIV.24-32; XLIV.5, 12-13, 18, 24, 33, 44; LIV.1, 2, 3, 7). Words fail to express that divine experience and in the struggle to articulate it, the poet-saint employs a number of allegories, parallels and metaphors and finally says that it is impossible to describe and says 'I shall be quiet' (XLIV.24).

The poet-saint as a philosopher had an intuitive knowledge of Reality (XLIII.98, 275), and as a mystic always longed for the experience of merging with God (XLV.x.1-14). As a realized soul the poet would say "I have become your own in such a way that *karma* is absolved, egoism is eliminated and Beatitude is reached" (XLIII.375). This blessed state of oneness is a gift of God's grace and Tāyumanavar thinks of it very much that way:

“You enlightened me and I realized the state of non-separation, within You” (XLIII.372).

The *Anandakkaḷippu* (The Bliss Festivity) (LIV.1ff) section taken by itself suffices to attest to the mystical elevation of the poet and his *Advaita* union with God. The possession of intuitive knowledge and the experience of Oneness with God does not restrict the poet-saint to the theoretical and intellectual level alone. The practical operation of the ‘*attuvita anupavam*’ (Skt. *advaita anubhava*) (XXVI.7) of Tāyumānavar is the bed-rock of his hymns.

## 7. Impact of His Hymns

Tāyumānavar’s hymns, following the rules of classical poetry and the spirit of his predecessors, were immediately popular with the saint’s contemporaries, and they had a potent influence on the generations that followed. People of his own time liked both the devotional and philosophical hymns of the saint. In VII.8 he says that his hymns have emerged out of his undivided devotion to God, and the Tamil world will probably find fault with them. He says that he has sung his poems as suggested by his imperfect knowledge. The poet hopes that the hymns will be liked by the people not because they are the inspired utterances that God graciously initiated as in the case of the Sacred poems, that are revered as revelations, but because of their love and tolerance, and that the world will elicit information through the grace of Ood about the Divine experience of the author. The following hymn spells out the above feelings of the poet:

kaṇṇal amuteṇavum mukkaṇiyenavum vāyūru-  
 kaṇṇavum aṭiyeṭuttu  
 kaṭavuḷarkaḷ tantatala aḷutaḷutu pēypōr  
 karuttil eḷukinṇatellām  
 ennataṇiyāmai aṇivenṇum irupakutiyāl  
 iṭṭutamiḷ eṇtamiḷinuk  
 iṇṇal pakarāt ulakam ārāmai mēliṭ-  
 ṭiruttalāl ittamiḷaiyē  
 coṇṇavaniyāvaṇ avaṇ mutticittikaḷelān  
 tōynta neṇiyē paṭittir  
 collum eṇa avar nīṅkaḷ coṇṇavavaiḷ ciṇṇitu  
 tōynta kuṇa cāntaṇ eṇavē

miṇṇalperavē colla accolkēṭ ṭaṭimai maṇam  
 vikacippat entanālō  
 vētānta cittānta camaraca naṇnilaiperṛa  
 vittakac cittar kaṇamē

These metrical hymns are not the Divine inspired poetry, tasting like the nectar of sugar-cane, the three fruits and the candy that savors in the mouth. They are the outcome of my cry of despair and the thoughts that arise in my mind without any order or sequence. My Tamil verses are composed out of the stuff of my knowledge and non-knowledge alike. The world hopefully, out of infinite forbearance, will not find fault with it. Oh learned ones, you who are well-versed in the path of *mukti* and *siddhi*, when you are asked about the author of these Tamil Verses, would you answer that it was by one who was "imbued with a few good qualities"? When will be the day when I will hear such illuminating words and obtain happiness? Oh the host of *Siddhas* who have attained the highest state of vedānta siddhānta *samarasam*. (VII.8)

The impact of Tāyumānavar's poems on the religious literature of Tamil in the last two centuries is an indisputable fact. The impact is not confined to religious literature that originated within centres like the Śaiva institutions that played a great role in educating the literati of the Tamil public. It spread to the masses and also to areas outside the circle of the religious movements. As illustration of the varied nature of that impact of Tāyumānavar's religious poetry in the 19th and 20th centuries, we may refer to three instances: a mystic, Ramalingaswamikal (1823-74), who does not consider himself as belonging to any school; a Muslim Sufi, Mastan Sahib (1830-?); and a nationalist, Subramanya Bharati (1882-1921).

In the work of Ramalingaswamikal (also known as Vallalar) we do not have any direct reference to Tāyumānavar. Vallalar's use of *camaraca canmārka*, which echoes all through his hymns, was clearly a theme he got from Tāyumānavar. In XLV. xiii.2 Tāyumānavar uses the phrase *aṇṇavarṅku aṇṇa*, originally used by Sambandhar in the *Tēvāram* III.120.2; and in XLV.xiii.3 Tāyumānavar uses *ennuṭaiyatōlanumāy* which is originally used by



Sundarar in the *Tēvāram* IV.11.5. The same phrases are found in Ramalingaswamikal's *Arupā* I.3.525 and IV.11.5.

Mastan Sahib, a muslim poet of Tamil Nadu, uses the special poetic forms such as *ānandahkalippu*, *nirāmayak kaṇṇi*, *ekkālak kaṇṇi* etc. introduced by Tāyumānavar. These forms are recognized by all as associated with Tāyumānavar who used those forms in his *pāṭalka!* (hymns). One who reads Mastan Sahib's *Rakuman kaṇṇi* (XI) will recall Tāyumānavar's use of *cumma* and would not miss Mastan Sahib's indebtedness to Tāyumānavar.

Subramanya Bharati in his writings confirms the deep impact of Tāyumānavar on him. The *Tāyumānavr Vāḷttu* of Bharati is an acknowledgement of the greatness of Tāyumānavar by the most illustrious poet of this century. According to S. Bharati, Tāyumānavar was the greatest saint of the land who was a *mauni*. He also realized the unity of the Absolute and sought bliss in its realization. Bharati's *Tēcīya Kitaṅkal*, *Tāyin Maṇikkoṭi Pārīr* and *Tamil Tāy* are consciously similar in form and rhythm to the *Ānandahkalippu* (The Bliss Festivity) of Tāyumānavar.

Tāyumānavar's hymns were liked by both scholars and the common people. The reason for this fascination is the mixture of themes and the appropriate literary forms chosen for them by the poet-saint. According to Varadarajan, Tāyumānavar is appealing to scholars because a few of his hymns are the 'outpouring of a great Saint's heart soaring in the philosophical heights.'<sup>35</sup> Philosophical ideas are carefully treated in the hymns. The hymns on God, soul, bondage, the union between God and soul, and many other related issues give philosophical depth to the hymns. Those philosophically high reflections expressed in the common man's language had a great impact on the ordinary people. For example, the transcendence of God as found in the hymns like III.1.5; IV.8; VIII.2 is brought down to the level of popular religious belief by presenting the transcendent God in terms of puranic fables and folk-lore (XXI.7; XXVIII.45; XXVIII.48; XXVII.55; XXVIII.24, 62 etc.). The souls (*paśu*) in the world, the nature of their activities, their bondage, the efforts of the mind, *buddhi* and *citta* are philosophical problems and these philosophical concepts are brought to the common man's understanding by way of imagery and metaphor. The fact that Tāyumānavar brought these ideas of soul, mind etc. to the common man's understanding, with the use of metaphors and imageries shows

that he did not use abstractions. The soul's activities in the world are said, for instance, to be like a garland in the hands of a monkey (*vāṇarakkaim mālai*) (XLV.vi.5). The illusions affecting the *paśu* are made clear through the popular story of *kāṭikatai* (story of Kāṭi).<sup>36</sup> The illusive nature of the mind is made clear by the metaphor of *indrajālam* (III.6) and horns of the hare (XV.1). Imagery such as the 'darkness of bondage' (*pāśaviruḷ*, V.1), or the 'wilderness of bondage' (*pāśāṭavi*, II.1) illustrate the soul's bondage caused by the *malas* (impurities of *āṇava māyā*, and *karma*). Images such as 'monkey-like mind' (*manamāna vānaram*) (XLV.vi.5), 'serpent-like buddhi' (*puttiyeṇum aravu*) (XLV.vi.8), 'wild elephant-like *ahaṁkāra*' (*āṅkāra mennumata yānai*) (XLV.vi.9), 'ocean-like *citta*' (*cittamenum kaṭal*) (XLV.vi.10) provide very appropriate explanations of the nature of those faculties to ordinary people. The metaphors of bud, flower, unripened and ripened fruit (*aṇumpumalar kāykani*, XLIII.157) used in the explanation of the fruits of the four-fold paths of *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna* respectively, are easily understood by anyone. The power and superiority of the *jñāna mārga* (path of knowledge) is lucidly shown in the following metaphors: *ñānakkanaḷ* (IV.7); *ñānākni* (Skt. *Jñānāgni*=the fire of *Jñāna*, XLV.xv.11) *ñāna ṭinākaran* (Skt. *Jñānadinākaran*=the sun of knowledge, XXVIII.50) and *ñāna vaivaḷ* (the sword of knowledge, XLIII.176). The soul's union with God is aptly described in the images of 'harmony in music' (*paṇṇin iṣai* XLV.xiv.1), 'salt in the sea' (*appinitai uppu* XLV.xiv.6), 'water in the milk' (*pālotunir pōl* XLV.xiv.23) and 'camphor aflame' (*karppūra tīpam* XLV.xiv.8).

The versatility of the poet-saint is described by R.S. Subramaniam:

As a philosopher he is remarkable for the clear grasp of abstruse doctrines and for the dexterity with which he clothed them in popular words. As *yogi*, he practised all stages and as a *jnani*, he saw and lived in the light of wisdom.<sup>37</sup>

Tāyumānavar's hymns, because they are outward expressions of his inner God-experience, (VII.8) make a unique impact on people. His call for ending religious disputes,<sup>38</sup> and his invitation to everyone to experience the bliss of God,<sup>39</sup> and his appeal for

religious unity,<sup>40</sup> make a telling impact on people of any religious loyalty:

His special feature was the bridging of the yawning gulf between practical religion and abstruse philosophy. He gave life to philosophy in order that it may appeal to the heart and be inviting to the thirsty soul. Dry philosophy blossomed forth, at his hands, into the cool shade of the Grace of God and the life-giving nectar of Bliss, to ease the weary pilgrim of life.<sup>41</sup>

The poet-saint shares his God-experience by articulating the glory of this intuitive experience (*advaita anubhava*) in his hymns and inviting everyone to come and experience the bliss of *mokṣa* (XXX.3) and to behold the divine call which grants *mukti* (XXX.2). Tāyumānavar appeals to people to reach beyond the realms of which religious systems speak (XXVI.3). He calls for experiencing harmony and love (XIV.10), universal sound (XIV.11) and universal religion (XIV.9). The saint's intuitive knowledge and *śivānubhava* make him strongly suggest to the proponents of different religious sects the futility of getting involved in religious and theological disputes and controversies. In XLIII.304 the poet-saint hints at the uselessness of expounding truth in crores of words. He appeals to people to extricate themselves from the labyrinth of words and sectarian paths (XLIII.305).

In LII.3, Tāyumānavar asks the question about the purpose of learning. He answers the inquiry by stating that the aim of learning is not to assist in disputes between different schools of thought, but it should be *inpaṇiṣṭa* (Blissful contemplation), leading one to unitive experience, and this is, according to the poet-saint, the quintessence of Vedānta and Siddhānta.

## NOTES

1. The original copy of the hymns as found in the *olai* (palmyra leaves) called *eṭu* is kept—although in a very poor condition—in the Dharmapuram Ādhīnam Manuscript Library, at Mylatuturai. The texts referred to in my work are taken from the Tiruppanantal Edition (1952), and unless otherwise stated, the translations are my own.

2. R.S. Subramaniam, *St. Tāyumānavar: His Life, Teachings and Mission* (Madras: Meykantan Press, 1912), p. 10.



3. Muttu Coomara Swamy, *The Poems of Tāyumanāvar* (Malasyia: Durai Raja Samgam, 1977), p. 3.

4. P. Arunachalam, *Studies and Translations: Philosophical and Religious* (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecarie Ltd., 1937), p. 181.

5. See TP., *Tiruppanantal Kasi Mutt Edition* (1952), *S.R. Manikka Mudaliyar Edition* (1916), *Ramanatha Pillai Edition* (1966), and *Ramakrishna Tapovanam Edition* (1980). In *Dharmapuram Ādhina Edition* (1965) the number is Fifty-five. The reason for this is that this edition does not include the *Tiruarul-vilāsa Paraśiva Vaṇakkam* (Invocation to the Transcendental and Auspicious Grace of Śiva) in the main body. The three hymns offering obeisance to the Supreme Śiva is not set apart in other editions and hence the total number is Fifty-six in other editions.

6. The hymn missing from this edition is the following:

avaṇē paramum; avaṇē kuruvum;  
avaṇē akilam aṇaittum—avaṇē tam  
āṇavarē connāl avarē kuru eṇakku  
ṇāṇ avanāy nirpatenta nāl

He indeed is the Supreme. He in fact is the *Guru*. He is truly all pervasive. Those who have become Him (united with Him) say (Witness) that He indeed is my *Guru*. When will be that day when I become Him (XXVIII.63).

7. The following are the main metres (*Yāppu*) used in the hymns:

<i>Name of the Metre(yāppu)</i>	<i>No. of Hymns</i>
Akaval	1
Vaṇṇam	1
Cantam	11
Vañci	5
Āṇandakkaḷippu	30
Vēppa	83
Kuṇal vencenturai	51
Kali (koccaka kali)	21
Kali (Kalitturai)	42
Kali (Kaliviruttam)	80
Kali (Kaṭṭalai kalippu)	3
Kali (Kaṭṭalaik kalitturai)	60
Ācīriyaviruttam— 6 foot	89
Ācīriyaviruttam— 7 foot	22
Ācīriyaviruttam— 8 foot	58
Ācīriyaviruttam—12 foot	118
Kaṇṇikal	777

8. See TP., V.1-10; XIV.31; XLV.ii.1-13; XLV: iii.1-9.

9. *Supra.*, Chapter 1, pp. 6-7.

10. P. Sourirajan, *supra*, p. 12.

11. TP., III.1, 4, 5, 8. There are various states of human experience. *Turiyam*, meaning the 'fourth', stands for the state beyond the three, viz., *jāgra* (wakeful state of the consciousness), *svapna* (dream-state of the consciousness) and *susupti* (dreamless state of the consciousness). *Turiyam* and *turiyātita* are

distinctions in the human experience of the Absolute without difference.

12. TP., VIII.2. People have mistakenly understood Tāyumānavar as a pantheist. See Reinhold Rost, 'Tamil', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, XIth Edition (1911). In this article Reinhold Rost presents Tāyumānavar as a pantheist (Vol. XXVI). He is not a pantheist, but is a panentheist.

13. God's love is compared to a mother, and the understanding of God as 'Mother' is expressed in various hymns. The name 'Tāyumānavar' itself refers to the story of God's saving act in the form of a mother. A young woman is expecting a child and her mother, very anxious to help her daughter at that time, plans to make the journey to her daughter's house which journey entails crossing a river. Word is received that her daughter is in labour, and her mother sets out to go to her. However, when she reaches the river, she finds it overflowing and impossible to cross. In her disappointment and distress, she prays to the Lord Tāyumānesvarar at the bank of the river before turning back home. Her prayer is heard by the Lord and He appeared to the daughter in the form of her mother, taking care of her as her mother would have done, thereby demonstrating that 'God also becomes a Mother' and hence the title Tāyumānavar. See K. Subramaniya Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 21.

14. The following hymns serve as examples: TP., XVIII.25, 43; XX.5; XXII.5; XXIV.10, 20; XXVIII.36; XXIX.6; XXXVI.7; XXXI.2; XLI.2; XLVI.12, 27; XLVII.19; LI.8-9.

15. Tāyumānavar uses *aruḷ*, *karuṇai* and *ṭayai* in order to signify the theme of grace. *Karuṇai* is used in VI.4; XI.8; XXV.13, 25; XXVII.5; XLIII.52. *Ṭayai* is used in XXXI.2; XLVI.15.

16. TP., VI.8; VIII.10, X.6; XVIII.66; XLV.19-20; XLVI.32.

17. TPMV., *Tāyumānaswāmikal Tiruppāṭal Tiraṭṭu* (Madras: Kalaigana Malikai Depot., 1916), p. 470. Also see Tiruppanantal Edition, p. 126.

18. *Koṇṭrai* is a genus of flower—trees—Cassia. Śiva, crowned with *Koṇṭrai* flowers is described as *Koṇṭraicūti*.

19. The five elements are space, air, fire, water and earth.

20. The *jñānedriya-s* (sense organs) are: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.

21. The *karmendriya-s* (organs of action) are: mouth, hands, feet, anus and genitals.

22. The *antaḥkaraṇa-s* (inner organs) are *citta*, *manas*, *ahaikara* and *buddhi*.

23. Also see TP., XIV.18.

24. The six *adhvas* are the *mantra*, *pada*, *varṇa*, *Bhuvana*, *tattva* and *kalā*. For details on *adhvas* see Umāpati, *Śivappirakācam*, No. 3.

25. One may recall here the original teaching on the *avasthās* as found in the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* I.3-7.

26. The five *jñānedriya/s* and the five *karmendriya/s*. *Supra.*, footnotes 20 and 21.

27. That which appear from the *jñānedriya/s* (hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell) and the *karmendriya/s* (speech, walking, giving, evacuation and pleasure).

28. *Supra.*, footnote 22.

29. TP., XXXIII.1ff; XXXIX.1; XLV.xi.1ff.

30. See TP., XLV.xiv.15.

31. Also see TP., IV.1; XVI.1; XXVII.31.

32. Also see TP., VI.8; XLIII.155.

33. TP., V.8; VII.6-7; X.9; XII.1; XIV.1; XXII.7; XXVII.28, 31; XXXVIII.1; XLIII.153.

34. The *siddhis* are a special kind of psychic and supernatural powers a yogi possesses when he purifies his mind and attains perfection. The commonly cited Eight Siddhis are *aṇiman* (the power of reducing oneself to the size of an atom), *mahiman* (the power of increasing one's size), *laghiman* (lightness), *kāmāvasāyitva* (the power of attaining things desired), *prākāmya* (the power to overcome natural objects and go anywhere), *iśitva* (the power of domination over animate and inanimate nature), *vaśitva* (the power of assuming any form) and *gariman* (the power of heaviness).

35. M. Varadarajan, "Mystic Poems of St. Tāyumanavar" in C.T.K. Chari, ed., *Essays in Philosophy Presented to Dr. T.M.P. Mahadevan on His Fiftieth Birthday*, (Madras: Ganesh & Co. Private Ltd., 1962), p. 326.

36. See TP., XIII.9. The Story of Kāti (*Kātikatai*) is narrated in *Yōga-Vāṣitta* (Skt. *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*) (13/14 A.D.). The book gives a popularized presentation of Advaita Vedānta. In the *Kātikatai*, the story of a Brāhmin called Kāti, the author of *YV* presents *māyā* and its veiling power for the better understanding of the common people. Kāti performed *tapas* (penance) for the purpose of comprehending *māyā*. His *tapas* (penance) was accepted and the Lord appeared to him and fulfilled the desire of the Brahmin, Kāti. One day while bathing in a pond he was in the throes of a powerful illusion; He imagined and believed that he had forgotten all *mantras* and *dhyāna* (meditation), he pictured himself dead and cremated, he then imagined himself born again of a lower caste mother, growing up, marrying, having children, all of whom died; now he started wandering until being made a king and ruled until it became known that he was born of a lower caste mother at which time his subjects being ashamed immolated themselves, with the result he felt so responsible that he threw himself into the fire; and ending the illusions he immediately emerged out of the water. This story of Kāti is to demonstrate the nature of *māyā*.

37. R.S. Subramaniam, *op.cit.*, p. 10.

38. TP., I:1-2; XIII:10; XIV:3, 4, 9; XXV:25; XXVI:5; XXVII:2, 51; XXXVII:1, 8; XLII:25; XLIII:5, 52:3.

39. TP., XXX.1-3.

40. TP., I.I; IX:9; X.3; XII.1; XIII.10.

41. R.S. Subramaniam, *op.cit.*, pp. 24-25.



## CHAPTER IV

# TĀYUMĀNAVAR AND VEDĀNTA

This investigation is an attempt to find out Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta. It is important because Vedānta, as understood by the poet-saint, is the foundation of the *samarasa* experience. This experience is the kernel of Tāyumānavar's teachings as found in his hymns.

### 1. General Understanding of Vedānta

Vedānta is an exposition of the deepest truth of the *Vedas* which record the experience of the *r̥ṣis* (seers) of old who perceived the highest truth through intuition. There are two ways of understanding the nature of the revelatory source of Vedānta. The first way is the understanding of Vedānta as the highest order of knowledge (*Parāvidyā*). The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* calls this *Vedānta vijñāna* (Vedānta Knowledge) (III.2.6). According to the orthodox and traditional view, the Vedic truths are eternally revealed truths. "The Veda is indeed revelation of Truth itself, eternal and inerrant. It cannot be superseded . . ." <sup>1</sup> Those truths have neither authors, human or divine, nor are they disclosed or taught by God. These truths have existed from eternity and great Vedic seers (*r̥ṣis*) were able to perceive them (*mantra-dṛaṣṭārah*). Those sages were special persons because they were able to grasp those eternal truths that existed before them through *tapas* and the transparency of their souls. They gave this highest mystery in Vedānta (*vedānte paramam guhyam*) (*Śvet. Up.* VI.22) verbal form and declared it to the people. It is in this sense that *śruti* is called *apauruṣeya*, an authorless, eternally-revealed truth. There is also a second meaning, more significant for the subject of our study. Revelation, here, is understood in a mystical sense. The Vedic truths are accepted as the transmission of the personal mystical experience of the *r̥ṣis* themselves.

The term Vedānta denotes different meanings. Literally Vedānta means the end and aim of the Veda (*vedasya antaḥ*). The Vedānta as the end of the Veda stands for the concluding

part of the Vedic canon. The concluding portions of the Vedic canon are the *Upaniṣads*. 'End' (*antaḥ*) also means the goal. In this sense Vedānta is the consummation of the teachings of the *Vedas*. In both these senses, the original use of the word Vedānta was to refer to the *Upaniṣads*. One has to remember here that the Veda was not called Vedānta. Only the *Upaniṣads* use the label Vedānta and describe it as *Vedānta-vijñāna* (Vedānta knowledge) (*Muṇḍ. Up.* III.2.6) and *Vedānte paramam guhyam purākalpe pracoditam* (The Supreme mystery in Vedānta which has been uttered in olden time) (*Śvet. Up.* VI.22). The integral unity of both the Veda and Vedānta may be summarized as follows:

The Veda is surely the one and only source by which the Supreme or the Ultimate comes to be known. But Vedānta signifies the 'knowing' itself, in the rigorous sense of pure *gnosis*, beyond the empirical and the discursive *aparokṣā-nubhūti* or *jñāpti* (Śaṅkara) or, alternately speaking, in the ecstatic sense of participation *bhaktirūpāpanam jñānam* (Ramanuja).<sup>2</sup>

The aim of the *Brahma Sūtras*,<sup>3</sup> which is the exegesis and exposition of the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads*, was finding harmony in the teaching of the various *Upaniṣads*. Vedānta, understood as the *Brahma Sūtra*, is the basis for the third meaning of Vedānta as a *darśana* (vision of truth) from the root *dṛś* meaning to 'see'. This third meaning of Vedānta is the theological elaboration and systematization of the Vedānta by bringing it into relation with various schools of thought that were in vogue at the time. The *Brahma Sūtra*, of course, provided the basis for further exposition, elaboration and diversification which was as Dasgupta states: "Śaṅkara's commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* is the root from which sprang forth a host of commentaries and studies on Vedāntism of great originality and vigour and philosophic insight."<sup>4</sup> The word Vedānta is now used for the system of philosophy based on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma Sūtra*.

We, thus, notice three definite periods in the progression of thought of Vedānta Philosophy. The first is the creative period represented by the *Upaniṣads*. The second is the period of harmonization of the *Upaniṣadic* teachings. The *Brahma Sūtra*

is the expressed form of that harmonization of thought. The third period of the Vedānta is the period of further exposition and systematization represented by a number of commentaries on the *Brahma Sūtra* and many other independent treatises. This period is noted for its tension arising from Śaṅkara's absolutistic interpretation of the Supreme truth of the *Upaniṣads*. The ultimate Truth for Śaṅkara is Pure Being, Pure Intelligence and Pure Bliss and is devoid of all forms and qualities. The Scriptural description of *satyam, jñānam anantam brahmaḥ* (Brahman is Being, Consciousness and Infinite) (*Taittiriya Up.* II.1) according to Śaṅkara does not refer to qualities of *Brahman*, for each is one with *Brahman*, each is indicative of the essence itself. The characteristic features we attribute to *Brahman* are transcended as is evident in the famous *Upaniṣadic* dictum 'neti neti' (not this, not this). *Brahman*, according to Śaṅkara is the God beyond God, the *Parabrahman*. This Reality is impersonal and cannot be thought of as either subject or object of experience. In the One Reality both the subject and the object are identical. The God who is bereft of any relationships and attributes is not a God in the ordinary understanding of the term God. The God to whom we attribute qualities and the one who is in relation with human beings and the world is the *apara brahman* (*Īśvara*). The impersonal Absolute is mediated through *Īśvara*. This distinction between God and God beyond (*para* and *apara brahman*), *nirguṇa* and *saguṇa* Brahman created a tension in Śaṅkara's concept of God and the sequel of that tension was the appearance of the absolutistic and theistic schools of thought within Vedānta. The absolutistic school (non-dualistic) conceived of *Brahman*, the ultimate Reality, as an impersonal principle. The theistic school (dualistic) represented *Brahman* as a personal God. An awareness of this difference and the tension that follows in its wake in conceiving the ultimate Reality within Vedānta provides the backdrop for understanding the Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam* of Tāyumānavar which will be discussed later in this study.

## 2. Vedānta in Tamil

Experiencing of Oneness between God and soul is the 'end' (*anta*) of Vedānta. This unity, in its highest form, known as *Advaita*, is manifoldly presented in a number of Tamil writings. The Tamil Vedānta works had also possibly guided the Vedāntic



thinking of Tāyumānavar. There are, however, no specific references in Tāyumānavar's work either to Sanskrit or Tamil works on Vedānta, although one can surmise that Tāyumānavar has been greatly influenced by them.

The earliest Tamil literature produced during the first few centuries before and after the Christian era is known by the name *Ṣaṅgam* literature. *Tōlkāppiyam* (ca. 3rd B.C.), the grammatical exposition of the Tamil language used in the time of *Ṣaṅgam*, divided the subject matter (*poruḷ*) of both grammar and other literary works into *akam* (inner) and *puṛam* (outer). Those *akam* (inner) poetic compositions represented romantic love between the sexes with all its feelings like emotional encounter between the lovers and incidents like infidelity, separation and then patient waiting for the final reunion. This love between the sexes which relates "expressly and exclusively to the theme of what is aptly translated as 'interior landscape'<sup>5</sup> (*akam* poetry). The distinguishing feature of its 'interiority' is that it pertains to the 'inner world' and speaks of something 'non-objectifiable'.<sup>6</sup> When K. Zvelebil<sup>7</sup> commented on the *akam* genre as "broader and deeper than the Sanskritic '*kāma*' he was implying, I believe, to that 'non-objectifiable' dimension of love presented in the *akam* poetry of the *Ṣaṅgam* age. The non-objectifiable experiential component provides the basis also for understanding the role of experience in the context of religion.

The Śaiva *bhakti*-poets used this love imagery to convey their passionate longing and intense devotion to Śiva. Love between the lover and the beloved with its 'emotions and incidents'<sup>8</sup> is an "appropriate symbol of the true path (*saṁmārga*)' and 'even the paradigmatic model for representing *gnosis* (*jñāna*) in its quintessential form.'<sup>9</sup>

*Paripāṭal*, part of the *Eṭṭuttokai* (Eight Anthologies) (ca. 2nd A.D.), is a collection of poems extolling gods. During the festivals devotees sang praises of gods and it is said that they prayed for love and grace and expressed their longing to live at god's feet (*Paripāṭal*, 18.54-56; 21.68-70).<sup>10</sup> Advaita, understood as an experience of oneness in love (*aṇṇu*) and 'living at god's feet', is thus be found in the Tamil *Ṣaṅgam* literature.

*Tirukkuraḷ*, a post-*Ṣaṅgam* work is well-known for its presentation of love and other lofty religious principles. Tiruvalluvar, the author of *Tirukkuraḷ* is known in Tamil Nadu as an 'Advai-

tic *ṛṣi* expounding an Advaitic way of life'.<sup>11</sup> The goal of life according to *Tirukkuraḷ* is 'reaching the feet of the incomparable God' (1.7) and 'clinging to the feet of the Lord' (1.4). The Advaita way of life is a life lived in love which is characterized by kindness and righteousness. Chapter Twenty-Five of the *Tirukkuraḷ*, which is on the possession of benevolence marks, according to the celebrated commentator of *Tirukkuraḷ* (Parimelaḷakar), the beginning of the section on asceticism which is the culmination of householder's life. In this section, toward the end, *Tirukkuraḷ* has chapters on Instability (*Nilaiyāmai*), Knowledge of the Truth (*Meyyūṇartal*) and The Extirpation of Desire (*Avāvaruttal*), in all of which the ideas of the Advaita are to be found.

poruḷalla varṛaip poruḷenṇu uṇarum  
maruḷāṇām māṇāp piṇappu

Of things devoid of truth as real things men deem;—Cause  
devoid of degraded birth the fond delusive dream.

(*Tirukkuraḷ*, 36.1)<sup>12</sup>

The verse, which points out a soul's failure to discriminate the real from the not real, sums up the essence of the teachings of Vedānta.

Tirumūlar,<sup>13</sup> the author of *Tirumantiram*, understood Advaita as a spiritual oneness and it received a lucid exposition in his work. In one of the hymns Tirumūlar says 'becoming Śivam is the end of Siddhānta *Siddhi*' (*civamātal cittānta cittiyē*, *TM.*, 1437). The path suggested for the realization of that goal is appropriate learning and practice of true *yoga*:

kaṇṇaṇa kaṇṇuk kalaimaṇṇu meyyōka  
muṇṇpata ṇāṇa muṇaimuṇṇai naṇṇiyē  
torṇpata mēvit turicaṇṇu mēlāṇa  
taṇṇparaṇ kaṇṇṭulōr caivacittāntarē

Those who learned what it is to be learned and those who practised the true *yoga* gradually attain wisdom by meditating on self-knowledge and become free of impurity. Those who see 'that truth' (*taṇṇparam*) are Śaiva siddhāntins.

(*TM.*, 1421)

The 'seeing' of truth as attaining the state of union with God is possible only through love (*aṇṇpu*). The terms *bhakti* (Tml. *patti*) and *aṇṇpu* (love) stand for a deeper love relation between the *bhakta* (devotee) and God. Tirumūlar even goes to the extent of using *Śivam* as *aṇṇpu* and *vice versa*:

aṇṇpuñ civamum iraṇṇenpar aṇṇivillār  
 aṇṇpē civam āvatārum aṇṇikilār  
 aṇṇpē civam āvatārum aṇṇintapin  
 aṇṇpē civamāy amarntiruntāre

The ignorant think that love and *Śivam* are two. They do not know that love is *Śivam*. After knowing that love is *Śivam* they abide in the love which is *Śivam*. (TM., 270)

In the highest state of *bhakti*, that state reached through faithful practice of the spiritual discipline (*sādhana*) of *caryā*, *kriyā*, *yoga* and *jñāna* (TM., 1455), the devotee's (*bhakta*'s) heart is dissolved into love (*aṇṇpō ṭurukī yakañ kulaivār*) (TM., 272) and he leaps into true knowledge and reaches final realization of God and God takes abode in the devotee's (*bhakta*'s) love *en aṇṇpil ninrān* (TM., 275). He also refers explicitly to Vedānta and to the Advaita (TM, 1421, 1422, 1437, 1441); but, means by it the final realization. The state of final realization of God that Tirumūlar presented in his work is Advaita. It is personal, mystical experience of *Śivam*. This mystical experience (*anubhava*) of loving union with God has become a recurrent and favourite theme ever since the *Tirumantiram* of Tirumūlar.

The hymns of Ālvars and Nāyanmārs are outward expressions of their love (*aṇṇpu*), devotion (*bhakti*) and God-realization. Sambandhar, whose hymns stand supreme in the Śaivite Canonical Works,<sup>14</sup> called *Pannīru Tirumuṇṇai* (hereafter PT) explicitly explains the 'when' of a *bhakta*'s (devotee's) realization of God: "when you *bhaktas* (lovers of God) remain united to the Sacred Feet of the Perfect Father of Anniyūr, then you are liberated".<sup>15</sup> Appar, a friend of Sambandhar, sought liberation (*mukti*) in constant meditation:

Why chant the Vedas, hear the *śāstras*' lore? Why learn daily the books of right conduct? Why know the six *Vedāṅgas* again and again? No release except to those who constantly meditate on the Lord.

(PT., No. 2405)<sup>16</sup>



Nammālvar's *Tiruviruttam* containing one hundred and four stanzas, has expressed repeatedly his longing for union with God. This is presented under the figure of the love of a maid for a man. The omnipresence of God, according to the following hymn, is realized only by means of love:

Many a different way of worshipping  
and many clashing creeds from different minds,  
and in the many creeds their many gods  
Thou'st made, spreading abroad thy form! O thou  
matchless, I will proclaim my love for thee

(*Tiruviruttam* 96)<sup>17</sup>

Tirumaṅgai Ālvār takes refuge at the the Feet of the Lord of Śrīrangam. 'Taking refuge at the Feet of the Lord' is a figurative expression for union with God. This state of spiritual progression is presented again as attainable only through love:

Thou didst not spurn the great son of the wind  
As ape, and of another race  
But, so that love and longing greater grow  
Than ocean, thou didst love, and say:  
"There cannot be a recompense for all  
that thou hast done for me; I will embrace  
thee, thou of faultless truth."

That such a shining boon to me may come, longing, the refuge  
of thy feet I seize, Lord of Srirangam with its beauteous tree.

(*Periya Tirumoli*, V.2)<sup>18</sup>

In *Tiruvācakam* (hereafter *TVM*) the well-known mystical work of Māṇikkavācakar, we have the climax of mystical outpourings of unity experience (*Advaita anubhava*). There are many hymns where Māṇikkavācakar vividly expresses his profound Advaita experience. In the *TVM* LI.1 we have a glimpse of his religious experience:

To me, living with the ignorant, who did not know the  
path of *mukti* (liberation). He, hurling out the 'old deeds',  
taught the path of love (*bhakti*). He, exterminating impuri-  
ties from my mind, made me Śivam and took me for His  
own. The Supreme Lord thus was so gracious to me. Oh  
wonderful Lord who is so blessed as I am. (TVM., LI.1)

In *Tirukkōvaiyār*, another work of Māṇikkavācakar, the love theme takes the form of sustained allegory. Attention deserves to be drawn to a line (Verse 7) in the text which combines the language of love and the language of Advaita: *ṇāṇ ivalām pakutip porppārarivār?*—who can know this mystery (*porppu*) of my being one with this lady-love?

We have so far sampled from the Śaiva and the Vaiṣṇava hymns those indicative of unity experience (*advaitānubhava*) as meaning Advaita in its popular, pre-scholastic sense.

The devotional (*stotra*) literature of the mystic-poets, however, took another turn under the influence of the *śāstra* (theological) literature which contains the theology of Tamil Śaivism. The doctrine of love, *bhakti*, grace, mystical union with God and other themes found in the *stotra* literature are preserved in the *śāstra* literature. The primary aim of this doctrinal literature, however, is scholastic in its approach to religious doctrines. 'Advaitam' as presented in Meykaṇṭar's *SB*, Aruṇanti's *SS*, Umāpati's *Saṅkarpa Nirākaraṇam* and his other works is a doctrinal category and they are critical of the way it has been developed in the Sanskrit tradition. Further attention will be given to these works in the next chapter when we take up Śaiva Siddhānta. There were, however, in a somewhat later period, popular religious works in Tamil which uphold 'Advaita' over against Śaiva Siddhānta which they consider dualistic. Two of these are *Kaivalya Navanīta* (The Cream of Liberation) and *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha* (Skt. *Yoga-Vāsiṣṭha*) (hereafter *YV*).

The author of *Kaivalya Navanīta* (hereafter *KN*) is one Tāṇḍavaraya Swami whose period (16/17th century A.D.) is antecedent to that of Tāyumānavar. The purpose of this work is clearly stated:

I proceed to tell you the true nature of the Absolute Being, to explain bondage and liberation so that even those who are too dull to learn the scriptures, may understand.<sup>19</sup>

This verse makes it obvious that the ultimate Truth presented in this work is for the common man's comprehension. This is made possible through the use of analogy. For example in one of the sections of the *KN* the *guru* explains the various stages of *jñāna* by telling the story of the *Daśaman* (the tenth man). The ten men on their journey had to cross a river. Once across the flooding

river they want to make sure that no one is missing. Each one started counting leaving out himself and ending up with only nine. They were all in grief at the loss of the tenth man in the river. A man who came by that way helped them to count and revealed the tenth man. The words of the man who helped them thus became revelatory and they got rid of their doubt and were very happy. Now the *guru* explains the story as follows. Their ignorance of the tenth man is *ajñāna* (non-knowledge/ignorance); the non-appearance of the tenth man is the *āvaraṇa* (veiling); weeping over the lost tenth man is *vikṣepa*; hearing and believing the words of the wayfarer on the road is *parokṣa jñāna* (hear-say); the realization that the tenth man is revealed, even though he always existed with them, is *aparokṣa-jñāna* (direct experience); disappearance of their grief is *duḥkhanivṛti* (cessation of grief); and the removal of doubt is *ānanda* (bliss). The story, of course, despite its popular garb, was familiar in the works of Scholastic Vedānta. Śaṅkara narrates this story in his *Brhadāranyakōpaniṣadbhāṣya* (I.4.7) and *Upadeśasāhasrī* (XII.3 and XVIII.176). But the way in which the story is narrated and interpreted in *KN* brings out its popularity and profundity at the same time.

While the First part of the *KN* exposes the truth (*tattva viḷak-kam*), the Second Part clears the doubts (*sandehateḷittal*) emerging from the First part. According to *KN*, the experience of Brahman is the final goal, (*Siddhānta*) and it is attained only through *jñāna* which is an everlasting enquiry (*KN* II.45). In one of the dialogues between the *guru* (teacher) and *śiṣya* (disciple) the teacher instructs the student that if anyone knows one's self and the Lord, one becomes that Lord. Becoming Brahman is the final goal which is difficult to attain. The disciple, however, is instructed that it is possible through Divine grace, *upadeśa* (instruction) and *sādhana* (spiritual discipline).

The *YV* was an adaptation and recreation to suit the popular imagination of the masses. The *YV* (also known as *Vasiṣṭha Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahā-Rāmāyaṇa*, and *Ārṣa-Rāmāyaṇa*) (ca. 13th century A.D.) in Sanskrit itself is a popularized presentation of Advaita Vedānta, and it is not surprising that the text was rendered into Tamil poetry more than once. It has made a great impact on a large section of the people and continues to be popular even to this day. It is the most important *śāstra* studied



today in Vedāntic *maṭhas* of Tamilnadu such as the Koiyulūr Ādhīnam.

The *YV* embodies the teachings of a God-realized sage Vasiṣṭha to an unenlightened pupil. The disciple's questions on suffering, the fleeting nature of the world and the state of existence free of ignorance (I.30.11) are answered by the enlightened *guru* in such a way as to suit the popular mind.

The role of renunciation (*sannyāsa*) is very much emphasized in the Advaita of Śaṅkara. Absolute renunciation of action seems impossible for sage Vasiṣṭha. According to the *YV* performing or giving up of any kind of religious, moral or worldly action is immaterial for self-realization (VI.199.31). What is required for God-realization is 'peace within' (VI.3.38). Sage Vasiṣṭha says:

Renouncing the activities of life and residing in the forest away from worldly disturbances do not in the least help one whose mind is fickle and restless. The home itself is a quiet forest for one whose mind is peaceful, whereas a forest is like a noisy city full of men and activities for one who is not at peace within. (VIb. 3.38)<sup>20</sup>

It is clear from the above statement that God-realization is possible for anyone who truly wills it and whose mind is trained through the study of philosophical works, association with the wise and pursuing a practical method of self-realization (V.5.5; VIa.69.27). The main path (*mārga*), however, for self-realization is *jñāna* (knowledge). (III.6.1.ḥḥ)

The *jñāna* that has been pointed out by Vasiṣṭha is not merely an intellectual conviction. The intellectual certitude in the course of time should expand into the Absolute and must live the life of the Absolute. Self-knowledge in the fullest sense is the actual living in the Absolute experience. The emphasis on living the Absolute experience in the *YV* makes this work:

highly honoured among Indian Vedāntins, for its philosophy and its hints on practical mysticism, as also its literary beauty and poetry. The saying about it, among Vedāntins, is that it is a work of the *Siddha-avasthā*, i.e. for the philosopher-yogi who, having mastered the theory, is pass-

ing on to the practice of it; while the other well-known works, even the *Gītā*, the *Upaniṣads*, and the *Brahma-sūtras*, are works of the *sādhana-avasthā*, i.e. for those who are yet trying to master the theory.<sup>21</sup>

This brief analysis should suffice to show the prevalence of Vedānta thought in Tamil. Advaita, the highly praised state of Vedānta, understood as a state of inseparable union, is found in various forms in the *Śaṅgam* poetry: the *Tirukkural*, the *Tirumantiram*, the *stotra* literature of the Śaiva Nāyanmārs and Vaiṣṇava Ālvārs, the *Pāṭuturai*, the *Kaivalya Navanītam*, the *YV* and many other works in Tamil. The Advaita found in these Tamil works may be differentiated from the academic and philosophic (scholastic) Advaita of Śaṅkara and others. While scholastic Advaita emphasized theory and learning for academic interest, *sādhana* and spiritual experience were the distinguishing marks of the above-mentioned Tamil Advaita. It does not mean theory has no place in the Tamil Advaita. Theory is helpful insofar as it clears the doubts of the *sādhaka* on his way towards a knowing-communion with God. It is a 'knowing-communion' because knowledge of God further leads the soul into deeper and more intimate relation with God. In Tamil Advaita,<sup>22</sup> the doctrinal 'oneness' and the other abstractions of scholastic Advaita are explained in a common-man's idiom and in terms of the spiritual experience (communion with God) of the *sādhaka* which is possible through appropriate *sādhana*s (spiritual discipline). This intimate spiritual relationship is made possible to everyone who faithfully follows the spiritual discipline and thereby gets rid of attachment to things.

In Tamil Advaita the spiritual experience (*Advaita anubhava*) is a love-union. Advaita in Tamil is an inseparable love-experience and that loving communion with God is now re-directed to the practical realm of everyday life. Advaita relation, visioned through a broader perspective of the deepest love, when extended to the practical life, becomes a social force. Advaita, as a social force, cannot accept and tolerate any divisive elements in the society. In this sense Tamil Advaita was opposed to the claim of superiority of the higher castes and it argued for making the *Vedās* available for study of everyone. The Advaita state in this understanding is taken as possible for people in all conditions of

life. Scholastic Advaita insisted that *Brahma-vidyā* should be learned only through the Vedic Sanskrit and not through any other language. Advaita in Tamil opposed this and popularized philosophy and theology in Tamil. The right to open new *maṭhas* and pursue *sannyāsa* (ascetic life) was made available to all those who chose it. All these new changes were argued for and established on the foundation of the central ideal of Advaitic oneness. This oneness as a love-experience (understood not sentimentally, but as experience of concern and compassion) is wide open to include everyone, especially the poor, the discriminated and the suffering. The Tamil word *aruḷ* brings out this sense. Tiruvalluvar speaks of *aruḷ* as the child begotten of love ... *aruḷ eṇṇum anpīṇ kuḷavi* ... (*Tirukkuraḷ*, 76.7). Concern for the poor and the oppressed and the down-trodden are viewed as service performed to God. Tirumūlar has expressed this high ideal in the well-known verse: ... *Naṭamātak kōyi namparkkoṇ ṛiyiṛ/ Paṭamātak kōyir pakavaṇka tāmē*: Whatever is offered to the One residing in the temple of a living body, will indeed be an offering made to the supreme God in the temple in which is held aloft the flag (*Tirumantiram*, 1857). The call for unity of castes and creeds emerging from the Advaitic ideal of oneness was well presented in the popular Tamil works discussed above. Vedānta as understood and presented in those early Tamil works, presumably had an influence on Vedāntic interpretation developed by Tāyumānavar.

### 3. Tāyumānavar's Understanding of Vedānta

We shall look at a few hymns in order to examine Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta. The poet-saint used the philosophically and theologically significant word Vedānta in a number of hymns. Philosophically he took Vedānta's import to lie in the fact that Vedānta referred to an everlasting and never perfectly knowable truth which is critically sought after by the cognitive mind. Theologically, he saw Vedānta as significant, because, the realization of the truth of Vedānta is the object of adoration, praise and realization for the saintly seers, mystics and God-loving people.

A serious study of the hymns will show that the poet uses the term Vedānta in a great variety of ways. There are Forty-one places where the poet explicitly uses the term Vedānta. In VI.6,



XXXVII.1 and XLI.11 Vedānta is used to mean the end (*anta*) of the *Vedas*. In the section *Karuṇākarakkaṭavu!* (God, Ocean of Mercy) (VI), he praises God as 'the merciful One who performs the blissful dance in the hall of inconceivable intelligence' (*karutariya circapayil āṇanta nirttamiṭu karuṇākarakkaṭavulē*) and then characterizes God as:

...  
 vinṇe viṇṇātiyām pūtame nātame  
 vētame vētāntamē

...  
 Oh (You who are) Space, elements which begin with Space, Eternal Sound (*nadam*), the Veda and the conclusion of the Veda ... (VI.6)

In the first hymn of the section *Malaivaḷarkātali* (The Mountain-bred Beloved) (XXXVII.1)<sup>23</sup> the poet-saint identifies the goal of Vedānta as '*vedāntamōnam*'. The 'stillness', that is Vedānta (*vedāntamōnam*), is the light and bliss where all religions merge like rivers into the great ocean:

...  
 natiyuṇṭa kaṭaleṇa camayattai uṇṭa para-  
 ṇāna āṇanta oḷiyē  
 nātānta rūpamē vētānta mōnamē

...  
 Oh the Light and Bliss of Supreme knowledge, which consumes all religions (all religions converge in Thy Light) as rivers merge into the ocean. Oh Stillness, the goal of the Veda, Thy Form is seen where vibration ends (*nātānta rūpam*)-(XXXVII.1)

Vedānta, conceived of as the goal of the *Veda*, could be explained only by silence<sup>24</sup> and is further expressed in the hymn XLI.II. The all-pervading nature of God is explained as *nādam*, and end of *nādam* and space, and it is also described as the knower, knowledge as well as the object of knowledge; the *Veda* and the end of the *Veda*.

Advaita, the culmination of Vedānta, is found in the following hymn where the poet-saint points out the contrast between the knower and the known which is comprehended in Advaita:

nātame nātānta veļiyē cutta  
 ñāturuvē ñānamē ñēyamē nal-  
 vētame vētamutivāṇa mōṇa-  
 vitte yinkennaiyini viṭṭitātē

Oh eternal *nādam*, Oh space where ends the eternal *nādam*;  
 Oh the object of Wisdom and the teacher of perfect Wisdom  
 and Wisdom itself; Oh auspicious *Veda* and the cause of the  
 silence which is the goal of *Veda*, do not separate yourself  
 from me here (do not forsake me here). (XLI.11)

Vedānta presented as the goal of the *Veda* is also found in VI.7. The eternal truth, which is the beginning as well as the end (*ātiyām antam*) (IV.7) of all seeking, is found in Vedānta. The pre-eminence and exaltedness of Vedānta, where is found the eternal Truth, is echoed in the praising of it as '*arumaiperu pukaḷ . . . vetānta*' (the greatest and renowned Vedāntam) (IV.7)

The term Vedānta is also used to mean the household of Vedānta system. Vedānta here does not seem to stand for a particular system. It is used as the name for the general household in which different schools of Vedānta could co-exist under the same roof. This idea of co-existence of various systems is also part of Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta. In the following hymn, the poet conceives of God as the Light (*viḷakku*) lit in the house of Vedānta (*vetānta veeṭu*):

pōtāntap puṇṇiyarkaḷ porricaya pōrriyeṇum  
 vētānta veeṭil viḷakke parāparamē

Hail and Victory to You *parāparam*, the Light lit in the  
 house of the Vedāntam. Thus praise the holy ones who have  
 attained wisdom. (XLIII.18)

In this larger household are to be found different human thought-systems, each claiming superiority over the other.<sup>25</sup> Vedānta as the householder of the '*Vetānta Viṭu*' (the house of Vedānta where various Vedānta thoughts reside) illumine and inspire all truth-seekers and in this sense no Indian orthodox systems can stand separated from Vedānta.

Vedānta is also used to describe the experiential state of the human soul. There are a number of hymns which evidence the struggle of the poet in describing the soul's quest for the truth

and the soul's longing for being one with Reality. In II.2, the poet speaks about the transient nature of beings which creep (*ūrvāṇa*), walk (*naṭappāṇa*), fly (*parappāṇa*) and are immovable (*iruppaṇa*). According to the poet, the everlasting reality is the 'upacānta vētavetāntāñāṇa' (the knowledge spoken by the *Veda* and Vedānta which gives tranquillity (II.2). The goal which the souls must strive for is Vedānta *jñāna* which is characterized as pure vastness (*veruveḷi*), unattached to anything (*nirālampam*), absolute-nothing (*niraicūṇyam*) and tranquil (*upacāntam*). The knowledge (*jñāna*) which grants calmness of mind (*upacāntam*) to an ascetic is the ideal of Vedānta. A true seeker of *jñānam* has to bear this ideal in mind and pursue it throughout one's life's journey.

The specific theology of Vedānta is distinctly brought out in II.5. The poet-saint's intuitive experience of the unique identity between his self and the Supreme Self is realized, when Tāyumānavar became aware that neither his existence nor his actions are separate from the Divine:

cantatamum eṇatuṇceyal niṇatuṇceyal yāṇ eṇun-  
taṇmai niṇai yaṇṇi illāt-  
taṇmaiyaḷ veraḷēṇ . . .

My action is always Thy action. The nature of my self does  
not exist apart from Thee. (II.5)

This, according to the poet-saint, is the nature (*cupāvam*) of Vedānta. His aspiration for this state continues in the rest of the above hymn:

. . .  
intanilai teḷiyanāṇ nekkuruki vāṭiya  
iyaṅkai tiruvuḷam aṇiyumē

How much I longed with a melted heart for the realization  
of this state (of non-difference) is known to Thy Divine  
mind. (II.5)

The soul in its advancement to perfection perceives everything in its proper perspective. In this state the mind acts as a witness devoid of any attachment whatsoever to anything. In this state of spiritual advancement the soul has perfect discernment in recognizing the transient nature of the world. The soul at this stage<sup>28</sup> is in possession of the intelligence and it knows that the



goal of Vedānta is the enjoyment of the bliss of release. This state of blessedness is granted to the soul by His grace (*niṇṇataru!*) (II.8):

vārātelāmoḷiya varuvanavelāmeyta  
maṇatu cāṭciyatākavē  
maruva nilaitantatum vētāntacittānta-  
maṇapucamaraca mā kavē  
pūrāyamāyūnara ūkamatū tantatum  
poyyūṭalai nilai aṇṇenap-  
pōtanēṇitāntatum cācuvata āṇanta-  
pōkame viṇēṇṇavē

...

It was Thy grace that granted me the state where the mind as witness has given up the things that are unattainable and accepted the things that are attainable. It was Thy grace that granted me to know the nature of Vedānta and Siddhānta as *samarasa*. It was Thy grace that enabled me to realize that this impermanent body is transient and to realize that release is the enjoyment of the eternal Bliss. (II.8)

Tāyumānavar sees this unique state of the soul as the tradition of Vedānta (*vetānta marapu*) (II. 8) which provides room for *samarasam*, the prime theme in the hymns of the poet-saint, which will be discussed in the last chapter.

*Māyā*, the deluding medium, obscures the true knowledge and prevents the soul from attaining grace through the enticing feat of *indrajālam* (entangling techniques) in the mind. The means for vanquishing *māyā*, according to the poet-saint, is the realization of the conclusive nature (the goal) of Vedānta (*vetānta nirvā-kaṇilai*):

ātikkam nalkiṇavarār inta māyaik eṇ-  
arivinṇi iṭam illaiyō  
antarapuṭṭamum kāṇalin nīrum ōr-  
avacarat tupayōkamō  
pōtitta nilaiyaiyum mayakkutē apaya nāṇ-  
pukka aruḷ tōṇṇitāmal  
poyyāṇa ulakattai meyyā niṇṇutti eṇ-  
puntikkul intracālam

cātikkutē itanaivellavum upāyam nī-  
 tantaruḷvat eṇṇu pukalvāy  
 caṇmatastāpaṇamum vētāntacittānta  
 camaraca nīrvākanilaiyum  
 mātikkoṭ aṇtam parapelām aṇiyavē  
 vantarūḷum ṇānakuruvē  
 mantrakuruvē yōkatantrakuruvē mūlaṇ  
 maṇapilvarum maṇnakuruvē

Who gave power of ruling to this *māyā*? Has it not any other place than my intelligence? Would this *māyā*, like the sky-flower and the mirage, be of any use in my state of need. Oh God, it (*māyā*) obscures from me the true path (of your teaching), which Thou hast imparted unto me. *Māyā* makes the impermanent world appear as permanent. It persists in my mind by resorting to entangling techniques (*indrajāla*). I surrender to you for Thy grace manifest. Tell me when are you going to suggest to me the means of conquering this *māyā*? Oh thou preceptor of Wisdom confer grace on me so that I may have the knowledge of the six religions and the essential nature of Vedānta and Siddhānta and the knowledge of the expanse of the universe in all its directions. Oh Thou preceptor of *Mantras*, Oh Thou preceptor of *Yoga* and *Tantra*, Oh Thou preceptor of *Mauna* who are descended from *Mūlar*, Oh Thou preceptor of Wisdom. (V. 3)

The Vedāntic goal of the blissful release, which is clearly spelt out above, is the only concern of the Vedānta-mind of Tāyumānavar. Anything, that stands in the way of that pure Vedāntic intention, is vehemently criticized or simply rejected. In the following hymn, he denounces the *lōkāyata*'s (materialistic) position. Vedānta here stands for the state of exposure of pure spiritual values:

miṇṇaṇaiya poyyuṭalai nilaiyeṇṇum maiyilaku  
 viḷikoṇṭu maiyalpūṭṭum  
 miṇṇārkaḷiṇṇamē meyyeṇṇum vaḷarmāṭam  
 mēlvīṭu corkkamenṇum  
 ponnai aḷiyātuvaḷar poruḷeṇṇu pōṇṇi  
 ippoyvēṭamikutikāṭṭi  
 poṇṇai aṇivu tuṇav itaḷ āti naṇkuṇamelām pōkkilē pōkaviṭṭu

taṇṇikaril lōpāti pāḷmpēy piṭittiṭa  
 taraṇimicai lōkāyataṇ  
 camayanaṭai cārāmaḷ vētānta cittānta  
 camaraca civāṇupūti  
 maṇṇa orucoṛkoṇṭ eṇaittaṭut-āṇṭaṇpiṇ-  
 vaḷvitta ṇānakuruvē  
 mantrakuruvē yōkatantra kuruvē mūlaṇ  
 maṇapilvarum maṇnakuruvē

Oh Thou preceptor of *Mantras*, Oh Thou preceptor of *Yoga*  
 and *Tantra*, Oh Thou preceptor of *Mauna* who art descended  
 from *Mūlar*, Oh Thou preceptor of Wisdom, who has through  
 one word saved me and caused me to attain the state of  
*Śivanūputi* where Vedānta and Siddhānta are at one. Thou  
 prevented me from falling into the path (creed) of the materi-  
 alists (*lokāyata*) who believe that this physical world (physi-  
 cal body) which is fleeting as lightning is permanent; and  
 thinking that the pleasure of women, who trap by their  
 decorated eyes, is real; and imagining the high-storied man-  
 sions as heaven; and protecting gold as an imperishable and  
 ever prosperous object; and who having given up the good  
 qualities such as patience, knowledge (perceptivity), detach-  
 ment (renunciation), love etc. had come under the spell of  
 evil qualities such as *lōpa*. (V. 4)

This hymn is a typical example of the forceful writing of the  
 saint when he speaks out against people who hold false and  
 materialistic goals which are contrary to the genuine, scripture-  
 based spiritual values of Vedānta. Tāyumānavar's understanding  
 of Vedānta as God-experience involves the rejection of all those  
 who do not accept God-experience like the materialists. One can  
 see that Tāyumānavar is describing not so much the materialist  
 philosophy that the School professes as a doctrine, but the  
 practice of it seen in secular living with thought and attention  
 focused only on one's own prosperity and well-being in this  
 world may be called materialist.

The poet-saint's admiration and appreciation for people who  
 lived up to the spiritual experience of Vedānta is expressed in  
 the section *Cittarkaṇam* (The Assembly of the Siddhars., VII).  
 The *Siddhars* were saintly people who by the practice of *yoga*  
 (VII.2, 5) attained the blissful state of Wisdom. All through this



section the poet-saint praises them for destroying the dark elephants of *āṇava* (VII.9); controlling their minds (VII.6) which twirl like a windmill (VII.7); for their wisdom and familiarity in the path of *mukti* and *siddhi* (VII.8); for coquering the senses and enjoying peace (VII.5); for possessing all gentle qualities (VII.5); and for their elated spiritual joy as a result of the Divine Blessing. (VII. 9)

Although the poet glorifies the *Siddhars* for their many attainments, the most conspicuous reason for extolling them is their realization of 'the end of the *Veda*'. In all the hymns in this section the poet-saint praises them for their unique attainment of the eminent state of 'the realization of the blissful end of the *Veda*':

. . .

vētānta cittānta camaraca naṇṇilaipeṇṇa  
vittaka cittarkaṇamē

Oh the assembly of Siddhars who have attained (realized) the tranquil state of Vedānta and Siddhānta. (VII. 1-10)

In *Cukavāri* (The Ocean of Bliss) (IX.10) the poet-saint rhetorically asks for the dwelling-place of God. It is not to be found in the philosophical schools of the world nor in the sun or moon or earth or in the zenith of the universe or in any of the visible objects in the universe. The dwelling place of the Divine is in the follower who, standing up with melting heart, offers God flowers, and whose senses and faculties of perception are completely given up, being totally lost in the Divine contemplation. This 'losing' of the self to the Divine is the goal of Vedānta, according to Tāyumānavar:

aṇṭamuṭi taṇṇilō pakiraṇṭa mataṇilō  
alarimaṇṭala ṇaṭuvilō  
aṇalṇaṭuvilō amirtamati ṇaṭuvilo aṇṇar  
akamuruki malarkaṭtuviṭ  
teṇṭamiṭavarum mūrttinilaiyilō tikkut-  
tikantattilō veḷiyilō  
tikaḷ vintunātanilai taṇṇilō vētānta  
cittānta nilaitaṇṇilō  
kaṇṭapala poruḷilō kāṇāta nilaiyeṇak-  
kaṇṭa cūṇiya mataṇilō

kālam oru mūṇrilō piravinilai taṇṇilō  
 karuvikaraṇankaḷōynta  
 toṇṭarkaḷiṭattilō nīvīṇṇiruppatu  
 toḷumpaṇerk uḷavupukalāy  
 cuttanirkkunamāṇa parateyvamēparañ-  
 cōtiyē cukavāriyē

Oh God, the pure One void of all qualities, Oh ocean of happiness (Bliss), Oh supreme splendour, wilt Thou not reveal to me, Thy slave, the place of Thy residence? Dost Thou reside in the summit of the universe, or in the space beyond this universe, or in the centre of the region of the sun or in the midst of fire, or in the centre of the divine nectar-endowed moon or in the form of the *murti* (the image) worshipped by Thy devotees with melting hearts offering You flowers, or in the eight corners of the earth, or beyond those limits or in space or in the eminent condition of *bindu* and *nāda*, or in the state of *Vedānta* and *Siddhānta* or in the various objects, or in the void invisible to us, or in times present, past and future, or with Thy followers who are detached from senses and intellectual powers (who are absorbed and lost in Thy Contemplation). (IX. 10)

#### 4. Vedānta as Advaita

Tāyumānavar, in a few hymns, understands Vedānta as *Advaita* in the sense of the oneness between the soul and God. Vedānta, understood as *Advaita*, means the inseparable union between the individual soul and God. This unity he understood to be the goal of all scriptures and the culmination of all human quest.

In nineteen places,<sup>27</sup> the poet-saint has used *Advaita* as the commonly accepted philosophical and theological consummation of thought and experience within the Vedānta-household (*vedāntavītu*, XLIII:18). An analysis of those hymns will help us see what he considers the true meaning and significance of the term *Advaita*.

In XLIII:293, the poet-saint explicitly attempts to convey the meaning of *Advaita*. In this particular verse, *Advaita* is described as *cuttanilai* and *ayikya aṇupavam*. As '*cuttaṇilai*', it is the highest state of separate souls and is next to absorption.<sup>28</sup> *Advaita*, as '*ayikya aṇupavam*', is the pure and unitive experience beyond all description.<sup>29</sup>

attuvitamāṇa ayikya aṇupavamē  
cuttanilai annilai yārcolvār parāparamē

Oh the unitive experience, which is *Advaita* indeed, is the pure state. Oh *parāparam*, who is capable of describing that state? (XLIII:293).

Tāyumānavar used *Advaita* in one place to mean absolute Reality. In I:3, he uses *attuvita vattu* to mean that Reality which is a non-dual substance (*iranṭarṇa poru!*). This non-dual 'substance' (Reality) is worshipped and praised as peerless and self-effulgent; the Intelligence of all intelligences, and the Truth above all religious conflicts and clashes:

attuvitavattuvai corpirakācattaniyai  
arumaṇaikal muracaṇaiyavē  
ariviṇukkaṇivāki āṇantamayamāṇa  
atiyai anāti ēka  
tattuva corūpattai matacammatamperā  
cālaṇparakitamāṇa  
cācuvaṭa puṭkala nīrālampa ālampa  
cāntapata vyōmanilaiyai  
nitta-nirmalacakita niṣprapaṇca poruḷai  
nirviṣaya cuttamāṇa  
nirvikārattai taṭattamāyiniṇṇolir  
niraṇcana nīrāmayattai  
cittamariyātaṭaṭi cittattilniṇṇ ilaku  
tivyatēcōmayattai  
ciṇṇparaveḷik kuḷvaḷar taṇparamatāna para-  
tēvataiyai aṇcaliceyvām

I worship with folded hands the non-dual substance (*attuvita vattu*), the unique and self-effulgent (*corpirakāca*) import of the Word, the One whose greatness is proclaimed by the inestimable *Veda* as the Intelligence of intelligences (*arivinu-kkaṇivu*), the Bliss nature (*ānanta-maya*), who is the First One, the beginningless and the essence of reality (*tattuva corūpam*), who is above religious claims, who is eternal perfection (*cācuvaṭa puṭkala*), the supportless but itself is the support (of all things) (*nīrālampa ālampa*), the tranquil (*cāntapata*), the pure ethereal space (*vyōmanilai*), the unchanging and pure (*nitta nirmala*) that is devoid of relation to object (*nirviṣaya*),



the object beyond all cosmos (*niṣprapañca poruḷ*), independent but the one on whom all things depend, the faultless (*nirañcana*), the blemishless (*nirāmaya*), the divine life that shines in the mind without the mind knowing it, the Supreme God who as the Supreme lives in the ethereal space of consciousness. (I:3)

*Advaita* is the pure and the proper state of the individual soul wherein dwells the Supreme Soul (IV:7). 'Advaita' contemplated in this sense, is a pre-requisite for the dwelling of the Supreme in the hearts of the devotees. The other dispositions for the abiding of the Absolute Reality in the heart of the individual are a mind of submissiveness and true devotion:

...

arumaiperu pukaḷpeṇṇa vetānta cittāntam  
ātiyām antamītum  
attuvita nilaiyarāy eṇṇai āṇṭ uṇṇaṭimai  
āṇavarkaḷ aṇivīn ūṭum

...

Thou dost stand inseparable in the good and renowned Vedānta and Siddhānta, as the beginning as well as the end. Thou art found in the hearts of Thy followers who have attained the state of non-duality (*attuvita*) and made themselves Thy slaves and become Thy true devotees. (IV:7)

The individual self is always restless until it reaches the supreme goal. The supreme end is *Advaita* and the individual's longing for that state of oneness with the Supreme is expressed in a single word: '*attuvitāvañcai*' (IV:2). The yearning for that *Advaita* state is a quest for merging with the Supreme Lord. This merging is *mukti* (liberation) which is the final truth and this ultimate state of final truth is *Advaitam*.

In the section *Cinmayānantakuru* (Teacher of Cognitive Bliss) (IV:2) the *Advaita* state is described as *vākkumanam anukāta pūraṇapporuḷ* (the perfect state beyond words and thoughts). Meditation on the sublimity and subtlety of that ideal state awakens self-awareness in the saint. This self-awareness and self-consciousness make the poet say that he is a sinner who perceives the impermanent body which crumbles like the bank of a

deluged river, as permanent (*ākkaiyenum iṭikaraiyai meyyenra pāvinān*). This supreme state of *Advaita* union is like a dream. The longing for realization of that dream is presented as: *ariya-kompil tēnai muṭavan iccittapaṭi ākum* (it is like a crippled person longing for honey to be found on the top of the branch of a tree, IV:2). The *advaitanvāñcai* (longing for *Advaita*), here, is equivalent to the desire to merge with God which is the final truth of Vedānta.

The section *Eṅkunniraikinṇa Poruḷ* (The Omnipresent Truth) (X) is very important in this regard. In this section, in verse 3 alone, the poet-saint uses *Advaita* three times:

vētamuṭaṇ ākamapurānam itikācamutal  
vērūm uḷakaliakaḷ ellām  
mikkāka attuvita tuvitaṁrkkattaiyē  
virivāyeṭutturaikkum  
ōtariya tuvitaṁē attuvitañānattai  
uṇṭu paṇum ñānamākum  
ūkam anupava vacana mūṇṇukkum ovvumī  
upayavātikaḷ cammatam  
ātalīn enakkiṇi cariyai ātikaḷpōṭum  
yātonṇu pāvikka-nāṇ  
atu ātalāl uṇṇai nāṇṇu pāvikk iṇ  
attuvitaṁrkkam uḷālām  
ētu pāvittitiṇum atu ākivant aruḷcey  
entaī ni kuṇaiyum uṇṭō  
ikaṇaram iraṇṭiṇilum uyiriṇukkuyir āki  
eṅkum niraikinṇaporuḷē

Oh the all-filling Intelligence, Thou, as the Soul of all souls, art the all-pervading One. The *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*, the *Purāṇas* and the *Itihāsa*, and all other sciences proclaim elaborately the paths of *advaitam* and *dvaitam*. The inexplicable *dvaitam* (*ōtariyatuvitam*) is the path that leads to the knowledge of non-duality. This statement is consonant with reason, experience and tradition. Further, it is agreed upon by both the dualists and the non-dualists. Therefore, for me will suffice my *caryā* and *kriyā*. As I become the image that I conceive of in my mind, should I contemplate Thee as myself so that I shall also attain the state of *Advaita* (non-duality)! Oh my Father, who bestows grace, come before me

in any form in which I can conceive of Thee. Hast Thou found any deficiency in me? (X.3)

We shall examine this hymn in its four different parts. In the first part (*vētamutan . . . virivāveṭutturaikkum*) the poet points out a scriptural foundation for holding both the positions *Advaita* and *dvaita*. In the second part the poet discusses both *Advaita* and *dvaita*, but makes *Advaita* the goal and *dvaita* the path that leads to that goal (*ōtariya tuvitamē . . .*). The third part drawn from the same verse shows that the view that the *Advaita* is the goal of *dvaita* and has the concurrence of testimony, reason and experience, and even further shows the concurrence of the advocates of *dvaita* and *Advaita*. The fourth part (*uṇṇai pānenṟu pāvikkiṇ . . . mārkkamuṟālām*) explains the *advaita* nature. This understanding of *Advaita* (*uṇṇai nānenṟu pāvikkiṇ*) examines one of the great revelatory pronouncements like “Thou are That” of the *Upaniṣads*. A number of those revelatory pronouncements of the *mahāvākyas* which proclaim the union between the soul and the Supreme, constitute the essence of Upaniṣadic teachings. These are understood by Tāyumānavar as the heart of Vedānta: the union between the human soul and Supreme Lord.

Commenting on “*ōtariya tuvitamē . . . ṇānamākum*” the commentator<sup>30</sup> says that Tāyumānavar sees *dvaita jñāna* as the cause of *advaita jñāna*. This is the Vedāntic view. Tāyumānavar, however, calls *dvaitam* “*ōtariyatuvitam*” injecting into it a mystical element. According to the poet-saint only “*ōtariyatuvitam*” is the means—not just any *dvaitam*—which will lead to *Advaitam*. The “*ōtariyatuvitam*” which the poet speaks of has an unspeakable element in it. Only that *dvaitam* where there is a kind of merging of the human and Divine, will lead one to *Advaitam*. For example, in Sāṃkhya there is *dvaitam*—*Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti*. One is stuck with *Puruṣa* and *Prakṛti* and will not reach the Supreme One. The advocates of “*ōtariyatuvitam*” concede *Advaita* to be the crowning end of their own dualistic framework, and in that sense they too lay claim to *Advaita*, albeit interpreting it differently. For Tāyumānavar this is the verdict of experience.

The integral relation between *dvaitam* and *Advaitam* and the *sādhana* (spiritual discipline as the pathway) to attain the ultimate state is echoed in the following hymn:



apporuḷum āṇmāvum āraṇanūḷ conṇapaṭi  
tappillā cittonṛām cātiyināl—eppaṭiyum  
tēril tuvitam civākamame collum niṭṭai  
ārumiṭat attuvitamām

As declared by the *Vedas*, the soul and That Object are unmistakably *cit* by their inherent nature. By whichever way you investigate, the duality will become *Advaita* when one reaches *niṣṭha* which the *Śaivāgamas* speak of. (XXVIII.16)

The soul by means of prescribed *sādhana* (spiritual discipline) enters into the state of disposition and leaps into the knowledge of the Supreme. In other words, *dvaitam* leads one to *Advaitam*. Vedānta, thus, is understood as the unique God-soul relation. In order to assert that non-separation he uses the term *Advaita*. *Advaitam* as an assertion of non-separation is described in a number of hymns. In the following verses, *Advaita* is used in a descriptive<sup>31</sup> sense. The *Advaita* state is presented in XLV.15.4 as a pre-condition for the soul's passage into a more subtle state of intimate relation, the *Śuddha Śivam*:

attuvitamēṇṇa anniyaccoṇ kaṇṭuṇarntu  
cutta civattai toṭarunāl ennālō

When shall I abide by the pure *Śivam*<sup>32</sup> after being seen and known by the word *advaitam* (which is apparently separate as word is separate from its meaning) which is the assertion of non-separation (which is a state devoid of duality)

(XLV: 15.4)

There are two ways of understanding this verse. One is having the wordless experience of *Śuddha Śivam* after hearing and learning about the expression “*attuvitam*”. And the second meaning is whether there is a state beyond the one indicated by the expression *Advaitam* which itself is a non-dual condition of relation between God and soul. In whichever way it is taken, Tāyumānavar is here referring to the distinction within experience of an earlier stage when one receives the word from the preceptors and the culminating stage of oneness as *Śuddha Śivam*. What the poet-saint hints at is the truth that once the individual soul is awakened by *advaita*-consciousness—a state where there are no distinctions or differences—the soul dissolves into the Supreme Lord.

Advaita relation is also described as a stimulus for religious unity and the promotion of peace and tranquillity between various religious creeds. This is possible, according to Tāyumanavar, only through the intuitive knowledge which brings about an intimate relation with the Infinite. This intimate relation with the Infinite is *Advaitam* and it is beautifully illustrated by the simile of 'ñāṇamattakagam' (wild elephant like knowledge) and 'attuvitamataṁ' (*Advaita*-intoxication):

ācainikaḷattiṇai niṭṭūlipaṭavutaṇi  
 aṅkāramuḷaiyaiyeri  
 attuvitamataṁmāki matamārum āṛaka  
 aṅkaiyiṇ vilāliyaḱki  
 pācaviruḷ taṇ ṇiḷaleṇa cuḷittārttumel  
 pārttup aranta maṇatai  
 pāritta kavaḷamāyp pūrikka uṇṭu muka-  
 paṭām aṇṇa māyainūṇi  
 tēcupeṇa nī vaitta ciṇmuttirāṅkuca  
 ceṅkaikkule yaṭakki  
 ciṇmayāṇanta cukaveḷḷampaṭintu niṇ-  
 tiru aruḷ pūrttiyāṇa  
 vācam uṇucarcāramiṭ eṇṇai oru ñāṇa  
 mattakacam eṇa vaḷarttāy  
 manṭrakuruvē yōka tanṭrakuruvē mūlaṇ-  
 maṇpilvarum maṇakuruvē

Placing me in the company of men who are filled with Thy grace, Thou hast trained me like an elephant wild with wisdom, which exterminating the pillar of egoism (to which it had been tied) shatters into pieces the chains of desire; which being intoxicated with the rut of *Advaitam* (the experience of oneness) casts out the six religions like the mucus flowing down from the elephant's proboscis; which roars in anger at the darkness caused by bondage (*pāsa*) as if it were its own shadow; which rolling into the ball of rice consumes with much delight the mind looking up and spreading out (the wandering mind), which strips away *māyā* (which makes things shine) as if it were a decorative cloth that covered its face; and then drowning in the great ocean of spiritual happiness, obeys only the beautiful hands that hold the goad (*aṅkuśam*) which is marked with the seal of Consciousness

(*ciṇmudrā*). Oh Thou the Preceptor of *Mantras*; Oh Thou the Preceptor of *Yoga Tantra*; Oh Thou the Preceptor of *Mauna*, who art descended from Mūlar, Oh Thou the Preceptor of Wisdom. (V.1)

The author of the hymn in a simple and understandable language describes here the consequences of the *Advaita* experience. It is also autobiographical in the sense that the above verse begins by saying that he was chosen from out of a group of the recipients of grace for the vocation of *jñāna*. The simplicity and understandability of the hymn lies in the use of a string of appropriate elephant similes such as *mattakagam* (wild elephant) and *attuvitamam* (*advaita*-intoxication). An elephant, when it becomes mad, destroys everything in its way; shatters into pieces the chains, uproots the post to which the elephant is tied; destroys the cultivation; eats up completely the vegetation it likes; in wild movement, it goes in whatever direction it pleases.

The individual soul, once it is controlled by the true knowledge and possessed by the true spirit, is liberated from all these forces. Being intoxicated with the bliss of inseparable union (*Advaita*), the individual soul breaks all kinds of bonds such as egoism and religious narrowness, and like the wild elephant (*mattakagam*) flushes out the river of mucus from its trunk. The individual soul in this state of oneness with the Supreme is totally under the spell of the revealing wisdom of the seal of supreme consciousness (*ciṇmudrā*).

In the following hymn Tāyumānavar uses *Advaita* in order to express the state of incomprehensible (*akōcara*) (Skt. *agōcara*) deliverance (*nirvṛti*). In VI:I, the ungraspable experience is characterized as *Advaitam* (non-dual), the true and *svarūpa* experience:

nirkkuṇa nirāmaya nirañcaṇa nirālampa  
nirviṣaya kaivalyamām  
niṣkaḷa acaṇka cañcalarakita nirvacaṇa  
niṣṭtonta nitta mukta  
tarpara viśvātita vyōmaparipūraṇa  
catāṇanta ṇāna pakava  
campu civa caṇkara carveca eṇṇu nāṇ-  
carvakālamum niṇaivanō



arputa akōcara nivirttipeṇum aṇparuk  
 kāṇantapūrttiyāṇa  
 attuvita niccaya corūpā caksātkāra  
 aṇupūti aṇucūtamum  
 karpaṇaiyaṇa kāṇamukkaṇuṇaṇ vaṇaniḷaṇ-  
 kannūṭ irunta kuruvē  
 karutariya ciṇcapaiyil āṇantanirttamiṭu  
 karuṇākarakkaṭavuḷē

Oh qualityless (*nirkuṇa*), painless (*nirāmaya*), passionless (*nirañcana*), independent (*nirāḷampa*), the embodiment of *mokṣa* which is objectless (*nirviṣaya*) and devoid of form, the unattached (*niṣkala*), the immovable, the Silent One (*nirvacana*), the non-dual One, the eternal, the Free, self-abiding (*tarpara*), the ever-full-like space (*vyōmaparipūraṇa*), the one who is eternally blissful, the Lord of Wisdom (*ñānapakavān*), the embodiment of bliss (*śambu*), the auspicious one (*Śiva*), one who does good (*śaṅkara*), Oh Lord of all, when shall I think of you thus always. Oh three-eyed Teacher who is seated under the banyan tree, Thou dost make obvious to Thy expiated devotees who have obtained the wonderful (*arputa*) and incomprehensible (*akōcara*) freedom, Thy essential form apart from all fiction as perfect bliss, inseparable (non-dual), true, and *svarūpa* experience Oh merciful Lord who does the blissful dance in the hall of pure consciousness which is beyond the reach of thought. (VI.I)

The sublimity of God-experience is well depicted in the use of *attuvita niccaya corūpa cāksātkāra aṇupūti*. The experience of Śiva is the 'seeing of own self' (*corūpa*) (Skt. *svarūpa*). It is an intuitive perception (*sākṣātkāra*). This seeing of Self, which is intuitive non-dual experience, according to Tāyumanavar, is *Advaitam*.

"Attuvitānanta cittam" (blissful *advaita*-consciousness), as found described in the hymn XVII:7, again is descriptive of the *Advaita* state of consciousness. In fact, the whole hymn presents the characteristic features of a person who has penetrated into the self and realized the self:

aṭi muṭiyum naṭuvum aṇṇa paraveḷimēṇ koṇṭāl  
 attuvitāṇanta cittamuntām namatu

kuṭimulutum piḷaikkum oru kuṟaiyum illai eṭutta  
 kōlamellam naṇrākuṇ kuṟaivu niraiy aṟavē  
 viṭiyum utayampōla aruḷ utayampeṟṟa  
 vittakarōṭum kūṭi viḷaiyāṭal ākum  
 paṭi muḷuṭum viṇmuḷutum tantālum kaḷiyā  
 pālaruṭan uṇmattar picācar kuṇamvarumē

If you rise into the supreme space (*paramākāśa*) which has neither beginning nor end nor middle, then you will have the consciousness of the bliss of *Advaitam* (oneness) (blissful *advaita*-consciousness). All our clan will survive. There will not be any unfulfilment. Whatever course of action you have taken will all be good and it will be possible to live and sport with the wise ones in whom the grace has risen like the sun-rise which has neither excess nor deficiency (perfect). These perfect ones will be in behaviour like children, the frenzied and the possessed who do not rejoice even when the world and heaven are given. (XVII.7)

According to this hymn, the one who has unitive experience of the self is a perfect one. There is nothing more nor less in him. There is neither the lack of anything nor any sense of unfulfilment in him. The state of mind of detachment and contentment is described in such a way that any ordinary person can have a glimpse of the uniqueness of that perfect state. The *advaitic*-consciousness of a sage is compared to the mind of a child, a mad fellow and to one possessed. Children do not think of the fruit of their actions. For the mad ones both friend and foe are alike and they never care for anything. The possessed ones, though one administers thrashing and pain to their body, the effect is on the evil spirit that possesses them rather than on themselves, and they suffer no pain.

The person who is in the state of happiness because of being one with the Supreme (*advaitānantam*), is beyond the limiting conditions of desiring for the fruits of work and is free from pain and pleasure. This disposition of the individual soul, according to Tāyumānavar, is *advaitānantam*, which is the essence of Vedānta.

The indwelling power in the self is a great unitive force. This unitive force is characterized by various attributes. In the section called *Maṇḍalattin* (Of the World) the poet describes the *Advaita*

state as 'bliss giving vastness', 'ocean of bliss', 'all-pervading and shining light' and 'unchanging bliss':

vālv aṇaittum tanta inpa-mākatalai  
nal amirtai maṇiyai ponnai  
tālvavaṇ ennuḷatt irunta tattuvattai  
attuvita cāram taṇṇai  
cūlperumpēr oḷiyai oḷiparanta para  
veḷiyai inpacukattai mārāt  
ēḷulakum kalantinrāy nālaiyāy  
eṇṇumām iyarkaitaṇṇai

It is the great ocean of bliss from which comes all through life; It is the nectar, gold and ruby. It is the *tattva*, the indwelling power, which uplifts me; It is the essence of *Advaita* (which is not two with soul or one alone); It is a great all-encompassing shining light; It is light-filled ethereal vastness; It is bliss spread around in the seven worlds (*ēḷulakam kalantinrāy*); And it is the same today, tomorrow and all days (unchanging). (XXVI:4)

The very idea here which lends meaning to all the epithets is the 'attuvita cāram' the essence of *Advaita*. *Advaita*, here is a state of unitive experience where the God-soul relation is neither 'one nor two'.

The Vedāntic end, which is *advaitānupavum* (Skt. *advaitānubhava*) (unitive experience), though closest to oneself, is beyond the reach of the humans. In a very descriptive way the poet says that even the endless *Vedas* confess their inability to grasp the *advaitānubhava* (unitive experience). The poet, however, does not leave the seeker of truth in utter hopelessness. It is his conviction that God cares and protects and makes the God-reflecting souls like unto Himself. This making of souls like unto Himself and the nature of that relation, are further explained in the following hymn:

attuvita-aṇupavattai aṇantamaṇai  
iṇṇamiṇṇam aṇiyēm eṇṇum  
nittiyattāi nirāmayattai niṇṇkkuṇattai  
taṇṇaruḷāl niṇaivukkulle  
vaittuvaittu pāṇppavarai tāṇāka  
ennāḷum vaḷarttu kākkum



cittinai mātūveḷiyait aṇmayamām  
āṇanta teyvam taṇṇai

That (*cit*) which is (the end of) *Advaita* experience about which the endless *Vedas* still reiterate 'we do not know'. That eternal, defectless and qualityless God, by His grace protects and cares for those who always have 'Him' in their mind and constantly reflect upon Him. That pure space and blissful One makes them as Himself. (XXVI:7)

*Advaitam*, here, is the highest state of experience. Even the *Vedas* could not totally proclaim it. They proclaim it as what cannot be proclaimed: "*neti, neti*"—"not this, not this". Religious sects which are involved in disputes, instead of impartially seeking the truth, cannot grasp the truth of *Advaita*. The one who unceasingly contemplates the Lord experiences that unitive state through the eyes of the mind and abides in Him by the grace of the benevolent God. This abiding in Him makes the *jñāni*—the seer—penetrate into the mystery and thus experience the Self in the self.

*Advaitam* is the inseparable and exalted non-dual and divine union beyond the transient pleasures and pangs of the world:

cakamaṇaittum poyyenavē tāṇṇarntāl ṭukka-  
cukamaṇaittum poyyaṇṇrē cōrāt ikaparattum  
viṭṭupiriyāta mēlāṇa attuvita  
kaṭṭukkuḷ āvat enrō kāṇ

When one realizes that all the world is a lie then all pain and pleasure are also a lie. Is it not so? Therefore without losing hope let us look forward to when it will be the day for realizing that inseparable and exalted state of *Advaita* which is the same here as well as there (in this world and the other world). (XXVIII:6)

This hymn raises a vital question. Can one reach that non-dual and divine state here in this world? According to Tāyumānavar, the answer is in the affirmative. *Advaita*, as understood and explained above, could be reached here. It is possible that when the soul is released from the bondage of ignorance, the Divine grace liberates the soul from all binding forces and leads the soul to the exalted and inseparable bond of *Advaita*.

Vedānta, for Tāyumānavar, is realization of Truth of the Veda (*vedaṣya antaḥ*). This understanding of Vedānta, in its foundational sense of the *Upaniṣads*—as the *anubhava* of the seers (*rṣis*)—makes Tāyumānavar focus his thinking on the experiential aspect of Vedānta. The experiential state of Vedānta has its culmination in the *advaita anubhava* (unity experience). Vedānta, thus, for Tāyumānavar is Advaita. It does not mean that Tāyumānavar did not understand the Vedānta as theological elaboration and systematization of the *Upaniṣads* by various Schools of thought, and he was not making use of Vedāntic ideas of Śaṅkara and others. However, as the later elaboration and systematization also purport to uncover the experiential content of Vedānta, Tāyumānavar's own explanation of *Advaita* may be seen to partake in their ideas like, for example, in the last mentioned verse. In that verse there is a clear reference to the idea of *mithyā* of the systematic Vedānta. The study of his hymns will help us conclude, with good reason, that his understanding of Vedānta is mainly in the primary sense of the word as representing the *anubhava* of the Vedic seers. The understanding of Vedānta in this sense—as unitive experience—is helpful in transcending all religious differences and disengaging from the schismatic fight on religious and doctrinal issues, taking Vedānta back to its more original and integral sense.

### NOTES

1. K. Sivaraman, *Saivism in Philosophical Perspective* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1973), p. 27.
2. K. Sivaraman, "The Role of the Śaivāgama in the Emergence of Śaiva Siddhānta: A Philosophical Interpretation", in Peter Slater and Donald Wiebe, eds., *Traditions in Contact and Change* (Waterloo: Wilfred University Press, 1983), p. 59.
3. The *Brahma Sūtra* is also called The *Vedānta Sūtra* as the philosophy has its support on the *Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Brahma Sūtra*.
4. S. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, Vol. 1, p. 418.
5. See A. K. Ramanujan, trans., *The Interior Landscape: Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology*, (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1967).
6. K. Sivaraman, "The Esoterics of Sexual Love in Māṇikkavācakar's Tirukkovaīyār", paper presented at the Seminar, McMaster University, Hamilton, 1985.
7. Kamil Zvelebil, *The Smile*, p. 21.
8. M. Dhavamony, *Love of God According to Śaiva Siddhānta* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 108.

9. See K. Sivaraman, "The Esoterics of Sexual Love in Mānikkavācakar's Tirukkovaigar", p. 2.
10. See Dhavamony, *op. cit.*, p. 111.
11. Meenaksisundaram Pillai, *Advaita in Tamil* (Madras: University of Madras, 1974), p. 6.
12. *Tirukkural* as translated by G. U. Pope and others (Tinnevely: South Indian Saiva Siddhanta Works Publishing Society, 1958), p. 94.
13. *Supra*, Chapter 1, p. 14.
14. Kāraikkālammaiār's (Middle of 6th century A.D.) three Tamil works (*Arputattiruvantāti*, *Tiruviraṭṭai maṇimālai*, and *Tiruvālankāṭṭu mūttatiruppati-kam*) precede Sambandhar, who refers to Ammaiār, but the reference here is to the order of precedence in the *Tēvāram*.
15. *Panniru Tirumurai Peruntiraṭṭu*, No. 289 (Madras: Saiva Siddhanta Society of Tirunelveli, 1961).
16. *Ibid.*, as translated by M. Dhavamony, *op. cit.*, p. 152.
17. As translated by J.S.M. Hooper, *Hymns of the Ālvārs*, (London: Oxford University Press, p. 929), p. 87.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.
19. KN., I.5 translated by Ramananda Saraswati (Tiruvannamalai: Sri Ramanasramam, 1965), p. 2.
20. Trans. by B.L. Atreya, in *Deification of Man. Its Methods and Stages According to the Yogavaśiṣṭham*. (Benares, 1936) p. 6.
21. Bhagavan Das, *Mystic Experiences*, 3rd edition. (Madras: Theosophical Society, 1959), Preface.
22. What is meant is the presentation of the Advaita in popular Tamil works. Meenaksisundaram Pillai calls it "Popular Advaita". See T.P. Meenaksisundaram Pillai, *Advaita in Tamil*.
23. One of the most venerated manifestations of Śakti, according to the Śaiva Siddhānta, tradition, is the gentle and benign Umā, beloved of Siva (Śiva-kāmi). Umā under the name of Malaivaḷarkāṭali (The Beloved of the Mountains), is worshipped at Tevai (the city of the Lady) near Ramnad in Tamilnadu.
24. Śaṅkara's reference to (*Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya* II.2.17) a teacher, Bahva, whose answer to his disciple Baskalin on the question about *Brahman* may be recalled here. When enquired about *Brahman* for the first time, the *guru* kept silent. When the disciple asked about *Brahman* for the second time, the *guru* said: *brūmah khalu tvam tu na vijñānāsi* (I am teaching you but you do not understand). The disciple asked again about *Brahman* and then the *guru* said: *upaśānto' yam ātma* (silence is the self.)
25. TP., I.1; XIII.10; XIV.3, 4, 9; XLIII.5; LII.3.
26. When it has advanced to spiritual maturity and possesses the ability to discern the difference between the temporary and the eternal.
27. TP., I.3; IV.2, 7; V.1; VI.1; X.3; XVII.7; XXIV.9; XXVI.4; XXVI.7; XXVIII.16; XXVIII.6; XLIII.293; XLV.2.4; XLV.13.2; XLV.14.28; XLV.15.4.
28. See *A Tamil-English Dictionary*, 7th edition, 1963.
29. In X:3 the poet expresses the same idea as *uṇṇai nān eṇṇu pāvikkīn attuvita mārkaṁ* (I-contemplating-Thee-as myself) is the state of *advaitam*.



30. TPMV., pp. 202-04.

31. Descriptive in the sense of the portrayal of God-soul union.

32. *Śuddha Śivam*—what is meant by attaining or being bound by the *Śuddha Śivam* is the soul's realization of the unparalleled *Advaitic* union with Siva, the One God. In a sense the term is a theological description of the *Advaitic* union.

## CHAPTER V

### TĀYUMĀNAVAR AND ŚAIVA SIDDHĀNTA

Śaiva Siddhānta is a special philosophical school of Southern Śaivism which continues as a living religio-philosophic system for the Tamil speaking people of Southern India, Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia. The Scriptures of the School are the *Vedas*, the *Āgamas*, the *Tirumurai* and the Fourteen Siddhānta Śāstras. Its special way of analyzing the three eternal principles (*tripadārtha*), *pati* (God), *paśu* (soul) and *pāśa* (bond); its explanation of unity in difference (*bhedābheda*);<sup>1</sup> and its adoption of experience (*anubhava*)<sup>2</sup> as a criterion of truth mark the distinctive features of Śaiva Siddhānta as a philosophy. It is a living religio-philosophic system because of its large following in India, Sri Lanka, South-East Asia and other countries<sup>3</sup> where Tamil speaking Hindus have immigrated; and because the questions it raises and the answers it suggests have great significance for philosophy and religion everywhere. Śaiva Siddhānta is inclusive and universalistic in its nature, as we shall see later, and that inclusiveness and universalism arise from its basic understanding of love and personal God-experience. We will examine, in the following chapter, these dimensions of this philosophy and see how Tāyumānavar integrated them in his poems.

#### 1. *The Vedic and the Āgamic Foundation of Siddhānta*

It is the combined *Vedic* and the *Āgamic* foundation<sup>4</sup> that gives Śaiva tradition the credibility of orthodoxy and the sense of greatness which make it popular with the masses. The idea that the two bodies of scriptures are in harmony is, however, not acceptable to all.

There are some Tamil scholars who see an irreconcilability between the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*. Those scholars would disavow any continuity between the *Vedas* and Śaiva Siddhānta. They would argue that only the Fourteen Siddhāntic Śāstras<sup>5</sup> are the source of Śaiva Siddhānta. These same scholars are also highly critical of the traditional belief that the *Śivajñānabodham* of Meykaṇṭār is a translation or paraphrase of the *Raurava Āgama*'s

*jñānapāda*. Instead, they would maintain that the Tamil *Śiva-ñānapōtam* is the original treatise and the twelve Sanskrit verses alleged to be found in the *Raurava Āgama* is the Sanskrit translation of the Tamil *Śivañānapotam*. In brief, according to this School, Śaiva Siddhānta is an exclusively Tamil School of thought and has nothing to do with the Sanskrit *śāstras*, the *Veda* or the *Upaniṣads*.<sup>6</sup>

Even prior to the time of Meykaṇṭār there was a ritualist school of Śaivism represented by, for example, Soma Śambhu (11th century A.D.) and Aghora Śiva (12th century A.D.)<sup>7</sup> who emphasize the *kriyā* (ritual) aspect of Śaiva religion based on the *kriyā* sections of the *Śaivāgamas*. The ritualistic dimension of this Siddhānta is obviously not drawn from the Vedas, and the Tamil scholars who see the School as independent, emphasize that point. The dualistic emphasis in the Śaiva Siddhānta thought derives its edge from the espousal and emphasis on *kriyā* (ritual). The ritualist Śaivites do not accord any place to the concept of *Advaitam*,<sup>8</sup> nor do they accept *jñāna* as the source or the sole means to *mukti*. Instead, they emphasize *dikṣā* (divine initiation),<sup>9</sup> which is *kriyā*, as the means of *mukti*. This dualistic group, whenever it interprets the *jñānānmukti* (Realization by means of knowledge) mentioned in the *Śaiva Āgamas*, interpret *jñāna* as *dikṣā*. The followers of the ritualistic tradition of Śaiva religion did not go along with a synthetic presentation of Śaiva Siddhānta seeking to harmonize it with the teachings of the *Veda*. The ritualistic tradition was, however, not a homogeneous one and was made up of a number of groups each following a particular *Āgama*. Each *Āgama* gives its own list of *padārthas* (categories) and *dikṣās*. As a result there had been no effort among the ritualists to find a common framework before the coming of Meykaṇṭār.

The Sanskrit Śaiva tradition that preceded the time of Meykaṇṭār leaned towards a dualistic and pluralistic interpretation of Reality. There are 'Eight Manuals' (*Aṣṭaparakaraṇa*) written and exegeted by the thinkers of the Ritualist tradition, and each supports the dualistic interpretation of the *Śaivāgamas*.<sup>10</sup> With regard to the Scripture, they accept the *Āgamas* as the sole authority. While some of the more radical of them specifically rejected the *Veda*, particularly Vedānta, the generality of writers did not expressly disavow the Vedic source, but held



that it based itself only on the *Āgamas*. It is to be noted that only some modern interpreters of that tradition insist on a rejection of the *Vedas*. The tradition proper in its classical form, both before and after Meykaṇṭār, does not reject the *Vedas*, but only holds that the system does not derive directly from the *Vedas*. The pre-Meykaṇṭār Śaiva Siddhānta tradition was not a single or consistent system.

Meykaṇṭār formulated the Siddhāntam as the truest meaning of Vedānta. The Meykaṇṭār tradition looks upon the Śaiva *Āgamas* as the *vyākhyāna* (interpretation) of the *Vedas*. In this synthesis of *Vedic* and *Āgamic* tradition put forward from a new perspective, *Advaitam* became the hallmark of Śaivism. With Meykaṇṭār Śaiva Siddhānta tradition became *śuddha advaita śaiva siddhāntam*. This description of Śaiva Siddhānta as the pure Advaita (*śuddha advaita*) will be discussed later in this chapter.

Although a small percentage of Siddhānta theologians still maintain the irreconcilability of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*, the generality of interpreters of the tradition agree that there is a connection between the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*. There are passages in the *Āgamas* themselves which have been cited to show their general agreement with Vedic teaching. *Suprabhedāgama* says, "Siddhānta consists of the essence of the veda" (*siddhānta veda sāravāt*). The *Makūṭāgama* states "the essence of the Veda is this *tantram* (*Āgama*)" (*veda sāram idam śāstram*). The same *Āgama* in another place says: *vedāntārtham idam jñānam siddhāntam paramam śubham*: "This Siddhānta knowledge which is the significance of Vedānta is supremely felicitous."<sup>11</sup>

The earliest Tamil author of Śaiva Siddhānta who clearly anticipates Meykaṇṭār in this regard is Tirumūlar. His work *Tirumantiram* is a monument of the Āgamic learning coupled with deep insights born of personal experience. In the *Tirumantiram* Tirumūlar brings out the relation between the *Āgamas* and the *Vedas* as follows:

vetamō ṭākama meyyā mīraivanū  
lōtuñ cirappum potuvumen ṛuḷḷana  
nāta nuraiyavai nāti lirantantam  
pētama tenpar periyōrk kapētamē

The *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* are true, both being the revela-

tions of the Lord; consider them as expounding the general and the special doctrines. They are the work of the Lord, but it is suggested that the two differ in their conclusions; on careful scrutiny, the great ones take them to be non-different.

TM 2397

Śrīkaṇṭha (12th century) in his commentary on the *Vedānta Sūtras* comments: *vayam tu vēdaśivāgamayor bhedam na paśyāma iti*: “But we do not see any difference between the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* dealing with Śīva.” He, however, states the difference as one of academic relevance: the *Veda* is available to the first three castes, which have the privilege of Vedic initiation. The *Āgama*, on the other hand, is special, alike for all the four castes. (Śrīkaṇṭhabhāṣya, II.2.38)

Aruṇanti Śivācārya (13th century), the great disciple of Meykaṇṭa, in his *SS* (VIII: 2: 14-15) speaks about the importance of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* and the relation between them. He calls both alike *mutal nūl* (Primary books). These books, according to the author, are eternal in the sense that they are revealed by the eternal God. The *Vedas* are said to be “general, and given out for all”; the *Āgamas* are “special and revealed for the benefits of the blessed, and they contain the essential truths of the *Vedas* and *Vedānta*!”<sup>12</sup>

This vision of the unity of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* found in the Meykaṇṭa corpus points back to the Tamil Śaiva hymns which are the main inspiration for the tradition. The hymns of the *Tēvāram* sung by Sambandhar (3.57.10 and 3.79.6), Sundarar (7.84.8 and 7.96.6) and the hymns of Maṇikkavācakar (*Tiruvācakam* 1.4 and 2.10), all acclaim that Śīva is disclosed in the scripture of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* alike.

The relationship between the *Vedas*, the *Āgamas*, the *Tirumurai*—under which come the above-mentioned *Tēvāram* and the *Tiruvācakam* of Maṇikkavācakar, and the *Meykaṇṭa Śāstras*—is depicted in popular images by the following verse:

vētam pacu atanpāl meyyākamam nālvar  
ōtum tamīl ataṇi nūlḷuṇney-poṭamiku  
neyyinuru cuvaiyā nīl veṇṇey Meykaṇṭān  
ceyta tamīl nūlin tiram

The *Veda* is the cow; the *Āgama* is its milk, the Tamil

(*Tēvaram* and the *Tiruvācakam*) of the four Saints is the ghee churned from it; the excellence of the well instructive Tamil (*SB*) of Meikāṇṭa Deva of Thiruvennaihallūr is like the sweetness of such ghee.<sup>13</sup>

The great Vedic and Āgamic scholar V.V. Ramanna Sastri's observation on the relation between the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* is illuminating here :

the *Upaniṣads* teach the highest *parōkṣa* truths from the intellectual plane. The *Āgamas* have a practical end in view and they begin where the *Upaniṣads* leave. In other words, the *Āgamas* teach men how to make the *parōkṣa* truths actual facts of *aparōkṣānubhava*, while they are still embodied.<sup>14</sup>

Although this is stated in somewhat tendentious terms, it is not without significance. It reflects the perception by the tradition of the continuous and complementary nature of the two sets of revelations. The *Vedas* emphasize the aspect of quest, while the *Āgamas* embody the quest as well as the realization.

## 2. Śaiva Siddhānta as Śaivāgamas

The term Śaiva Siddhānta may be understood in different senses. In its original sense Śaiva Siddhānta is the proper name for the body of the revealed scripture, which forms the original source of the knowledge of the all-transcending Word (*parā vāk*), which is God's unspoken Thought. Śaiva Siddhānta, understood in this sense, means the *Śaivāgamas* emanating from Śiva. The *Śaivāgamas* themselves apply the term Śaiva Siddhānta to the Twenty-Eight *Āgamas*.<sup>15</sup> The *Kāmikāgama* in its *Tantrāvatāra paṭala* (section) uses Śaiva Siddhānta to refer to the Twenty-eight *Āgamas*.<sup>16</sup> The *Trika*<sup>17</sup> tradition refers to the corpus of the Twenty-Eight *Śaivāgamas* as Śaiva Siddhānta.<sup>18</sup> Even Abhinava Gupta, an outsider to the tradition, seems to refer to Śaiva Siddhānta as the *Āgamas* when he wrote "*siddhānta karma-bahulam malamāyādirupitam*".<sup>19</sup>

Besides, perceiving Śaiva Siddhānta in its primordial sense as referring to a body of Sacred Scripture (the *Āgamas*) originating from Śiva Himself, there is a derivative meaning of the term.<sup>20</sup> Śaiva Siddhānta, in the second sense, is conceived as an exegesis and systematization of the scriptural teachings. As exegesis,



Śaiva Siddhānta claims to be an authentic representation of the *Vedic* and *Āgamic* revelation. This exegesis is intended to help grasp the original intention of the Sacred Scriptures. In this sense the *Āgamas* are the expansion of and the only legitimate complement to the *Veda*. The *Āgamic* teachings are exegetically interpreted as re-discovering, the eternal message within the *Vedas*, and are established as the accomplished and final truth (Śaiva Siddhānta) relating to the Ultimate Reality perceived as Śiva.<sup>21</sup> Śaiva Siddhānta system, thus, according to the second sense of the term outlined above, is an exegetical interpretation of the intuitions embodied in the scriptural revelations. The experiential dimension embodied in the Sacred Scripture is further sought to be uncovered and systematized in the light of the perception and experience of the saint-founders of the tradition. Śaiva Siddhānta, as we understand it today, is the harmonization and systematization of the Śaivite doctrines found in the *Vedas*, the *Āgamas* and the *Tirumurai* through intuitive reasoning and extensive learning and research by men of genius like Meykaṇṭār (13th century), Aruṇandi (13th century) and Umāpati (14th century). Śaiva Siddhānta, as we understand it today, will be studied as two phases of thought—development, namely, the *Āgamic* Śaiva Siddhānta and the *Śuddhādyaita* of the Meykaṇṭa tradition.

The *Āgamic* Śaiva Siddhānta tradition claims divine origin because its basis is the revelation of God through the Twenty-eight *Āgamas*.<sup>22</sup> The *Āgamas*, which bear the same divine and authoritative status ascribed to the *Vedas*, are said to be written in Sanskrit, Prakrit and some local dialects.<sup>23</sup> Special efforts are being made to make them available in Nāgari script through the efforts of the French Institute of Indology in Pondicherry, India.

Tirumūlar in his *Tirumaṇṭiram*, as observed earlier, refers to the *Āgamas*. According to Tirumūlar the *Āgamas* have come from the Supreme Śiva (*Tirumaṇṭiram*, verses 67-72) and they are numerous (*Tirumaṇṭiram*, 74). In verse 67, however, he restricts the number of *Āgamas* to twenty-eight and in verse 73 he further reduces the number to nine giving their names as *Kāraṇam*, *Kāmikām*, *Vīram*, *Cintyam*, *Vātulam*, *Viyāmalam*, *Kālottaram*, *Cupīram* and *Makuṭam*. The *Tēvaram* hymnists, who lived between the 7th and 9th centuries A.D. refer to and praise the *Āgamas* in their hymns (Sambandhar, 3.57.10 and 3.79.6;

Sundarar, 7.84.8 and 7.96.6; Māṇikkavācagar, *Tiruvācakam*, 1.4 and 2.10). These references at least establish that, the age of the *Āgamas* is before the 6th century A.D. Referring to the time of the *Āgamas* S. Dasgupta says, "The date of the *Āgamas* cannot be definitely fixed. It may be suggested that the earliest of them were written some time in the second or third century A.D.; and these must have been continued till the thirteenth or fourteenth century".<sup>24</sup>

In the broadest sense, *Āgama* simply means 'that which has come'. This may be understood in two senses. First, that which has been handed down from Śiva to the Sages. In the second sense it can mean the traditional transmitting of knowledge from teacher to pupil. A somewhat fanciful meaning is derived by splitting the word *Āgama* into its component letters, namely, "ā"—"ga"—"ma" which denote *pati*, *paśu* and *pāśa*, respectively, the three entities and their relationship which the *Āgamas* deal with. The following Sanskrit verse shows the significance of the *Āgamas* for the formation of a religious tradition:

*Āgatam Śiva-vaktrebhyaḥ gatam ca girijā-mukhe  
Matam ca Śiva-bhaktanām āgamam ceti kathyate:*

The *āgamas* originated from the faces of Śiva, fell in the ears of Girijā (*Parāśakti*) and spread in the world as the *mata* (religion) of the Śiva *bhaktas*.

A different, but similar way of understanding the term *Āgama* is splitting it into "ā"=knowledge; "ga"=liberation; "ma"=removal of bonds. This splitting is meaningful because "the study of the *āgama* and a faithful adherence to its codes liberates the soul from bondage or worldly fetters, causes realization of the Supreme, and ultimately confers Eternal Bliss."<sup>25</sup>

The *Āgamas* deal with a wide range of topics like rituals, construction of temples and temple architecture, rules for priests and devotees, philosophy etc. The contents of the *Āgamas* are brought under four main sections (*pādas*), namely, *jñāna pāda* (dealing with knowledge, philosophy), *yoga pāda* (dealing with yogic practices), *kriyā pāda* (dealing with rituals) and *caryā pāda* (dealing with personal conduct and discipline).

The *jñāna pāda* deals with the fundamental philosophical ideas. This part of the *Āgamas* discusses *pati* (Lord), *paśu* (soul), *pāśa*

(the fetters) that bind the soul, namely, *āṇava mala*, *karma mala*, *māyā mala*; the relation between the above three entities; the thirty-six *tattvas* (categories); the final goal etc. This section, provides the theoretical basis for the other sections (*pādas*).<sup>26</sup>

The *Yoga pāda* is the scantiest part in the *āgamas*. This section, which is sometimes interwoven with the *Kriyā* and *Caryā* sections, describes the structure of the human body and provides means for disciplining the mind for meditation on Śiva which finally helps the soul in attaining *samādhi* (intense concentration). (*Rauravāgama*, *Jñānapāda*, chapter I, section 7.5; *Suprabhed-āgama yogapāda*, 3.53.)

The *Kriyāpāda* (section on rites) is the largest section in all the available *āgamas*. It lays down an elaborate code of conduct, instructions on the installation and consecration of deities, temple construction and temple architecture, daily rites, fire rites (*agnikārya*), Śiva *pūjā*, daily worship, daily and annual festivals etc. and helps the soul in understanding and realizing the purpose of life behind those elaborate rites and rituals.

The *Caryāpāda*, the code of personal conduct and discipline, is a basic preparation intended to purify the body, mind and spirit of a person who has to advance in his spiritual life and attain oneness with Śiva. It deals with the prescribed duties and ceremonials of the worshippers, with purificatory ceremonies, and with other rites.

This four-fold division is not in fact found in all the *āgamas* and a particular *āgama* may omit certain sections. For example, of the *āgamas* available in print today only three, namely, the *Suprabheda*, the *Mrgendra*, and the *Kiraṇa* have all the four *pādas* (sections). While the *Rauravāgama* contains the *jñāna* and *kriyā* sections, the *Kāmika*, the *Kāraṇa* and the *Ajita* contain only the *kriyā* section. A second important point to bear in mind is that a section (*pāda*) should not be seen as independent or mutually exclusive. All the sections in an ascending order (from *caryā* to *jñāna*) lead the soul to the final goal—liberation (*mukti*). This is the sense of the following *Mrgendrāgama* verse found in *jñāna-pāda* 2.8:

iti vastu-trayasyaasya prāk-pāda-kṛtaṃsamthiteḥ caryā-yogā-kriyā-padairviniyogo'bhidāsyate.

These three categories are treated of in the first *pāda* (the



*jñānapāda*) and it will be taught below that these must also be taken over into the *caryā*, *kriyā*, and *yoga pādās* also.<sup>27</sup>

The inter-relatedness of these four sections is stated by Helene Brunner<sup>28</sup> as follows:

Le succès implique à la fois la connaissance théorique du but et des moyens, qui relève du *jñānapāda* et du *yogapāda*, et la connaissance pratique du chemin, qui relève du *kriyāpāda* et du *caryāpāda*. C'est pourquoi l'on ne peut isoler les unes des autres les quatre sections des *āgama*; et c'est pourquoi il serait vain, comme on peut en être tenté d'abord. . .

The success implies at the same time the theoretical knowledge of the goal and of the means, which belongs to the *jñāna* section and to the *yoga* section, and the practical knowledge of the path, which belongs to the *kriyā* and *caryā* sections. This is why one cannot isolate the four sections (*pādas*) of the *Āgamas*, the one from the other; and that is why it would be in vain to be tempted to look firstly for the mysticism of the *Āgamas* by referring solely to the first two sections and considering them most important.

The *Āgamas*, understood as Śaiva Siddhānta, lay down three eternal entities, viz., *pati* (Lord), *paśu* (Soul) and *pāśa* (bond) as fundamental entities of the *āgamic* Śaivite philosophical system. The *Mṛgendrāgama*, *jñānapāda*, chapter 2 verse 1 gives the picture of Śiva, the God, and the summary of the whole system:

Śiva is beginningless, free from defects, the all knower. He removes from the infinitesimal soul the web of bonds that obscure its nature.<sup>29</sup>

While this verse presents Śiva as eternal, pure and all-knowing, it speaks also about the existence of an infinity of souls and their fettered nature, like the spider bound by the web, and about the release of the soul by God. The *Ajitāgama*, *Kriyāpāda* Section One, conceives of God as Brahman and says:

Brahman has two forms (st. 25), the higher (*parā Brahman*), which is beyond word and thought and is the Highest Śiva, and the definable Brahman which can be the object of meditation and is Sadāśiva, materialized as the syllable *Om*. . .<sup>30</sup>

The *Ajitāgama*, in Section Two of the *Kriyāpāda*, described *pati* as:

Śiva, *Sarvottara* ('Superior to All'), *Sthāṇu* (Immovable One), *Paramātmā* (Highest Soul), *Maheśvara* (Great Lord), of the form of existence, consciousness, and bliss, without the distinction of being and not-being, omnipresent, called by the name Brahman, higher than the gross and the subtle, the manifested and the unmanifested and both (manifested and unmanifested), the external and the internal and both external and internal, the uninterrupted and the interrupted and the uninterrupted-and-interrupted, male and female and neither man nor woman. . . light and darkness, the near and the far. . . the four Vedas proclaim Him and so do all other scriptures. . .<sup>31</sup>

The souls and the world cannot have their existence without God (Śiva) who is both transcendent and immanent. The creation of the world is effected through His Divine creative energy (*śakti*), which is the instrumental cause, and *māyā*, the primordial matter out of which develops the material world under God's *śakti*, which is the material cause.

The question of creation brings in the other two entities, *pāśa* and *paśu*. God's creation is not for Himself, nor is it purposeless, it is for the "enslaved" souls. Souls are all-pervasive and they possess eternal power by the Supreme power of God. They have the potential for intuitive knowledge and spontaneous action (*caitanyam drk-kriyā-rūpam*).<sup>32</sup> This power of the soul, however, is veiled by *malas* (impurities). The *Mṛgendrāgama*, while describing the nature of the souls, says:

nāvyāpako nakṣaṇiko naiko nāpi jaḍatmakah  
nākartābhinnacid yogī pāśānte śivamāpnuteḥ

The *Ātmā* is not *avyāpi* (not-omnipresent, limited), not-momentary, not a non-doer, and is ever united to intelligence, for it is heard that after the *pāśa* is removed, he attains to the state of Śiva.<sup>33</sup>

The *pāśa* (bond) which this verse speaks of obscures the souls. This obscuration is for all the beings and it is beginningless, dense, great and possessed of numerous powers which reside in

every soul and are cast off when their time comes. This casting off takes place when the grace of Śiva descends on the soul (*Mṛgendrāgama*, *jñānapāda*, 7.8). The *pāśa* that enslaves the potentially all-knowing soul is described as: *ātmā malāvṛta sarva-jñatve kiñcit-jñāta yataḥ*: The soul is enveloped by impurity (*malam*) and so is limited in knowledge (although, potentially it is all-knowing). The *mala* which has always veiled the souls is *āṇava mala*, the soul is born with it. The *āṇava mala* which binds and restricts the all-knowing and all-pervasive nature of the soul is eternal with the soul and can be detached only when the time comes (when it is ripened) by the saving energy of God (*anugrahaśakti*). The other two *pāśas* (fettters) are *karma* and *māyā*. The association of the souls with the body, time and place involves them in actions or deeds. *Karma* is produced by the activities of the body (*kāya*), speech (*vāk*) and mind (*manas*) (*Mṛgendrāgama*, *jñānapāda*, 8.4). Action (*karma*) is performed by people desiring the fruits of their actions. *Karma* thus possesses the nature of accumulating merit or demerit and this is eternal. *Karma* is a *pāśa* when there is longing for fruits of the action and thereby desire for further action, and consequently the soul is world-bound and its real nature is obscured.

The *Mṛgendrāgama* describes the nature of *māyāmala* as:

tadekamaśivam bijam jagataścitraśaktimat  
sahakāryadhikārānta-saṃrodhi vyāpyanāśvaram

It is single, unpropitious (*aśiva*), the seed of the universe, and possessed of manifold *śaktis*. It obstructs the soul till the authority of its helper (*karma*) should cease and is universal and imperishable.<sup>34</sup>

*Māyā*, as the material cause, produces the world and the bodies and so bondage comes out of the products of *māyā*. In this sense *māyā* is the original cause of bondage. It is a *pāśa* as long as its products are objects of enjoyment for the soul, obstructing the true goal of the soul. As a *pāśa* it restricts *paśu* (soul) and obstructs the full expression of the real nature of *ātmā* (soul).

The souls which are bound by the above fetters live in the world so that the *malas* get ripened. The created world in this sense is a milieu wherein the souls may be prepared for detachment from the matter which fastens itself to them. They realize the true Self, which is liberation (*mokṣa*).



In an effort to achieve this ideal state, as described in the *jñānapāda* of the *āgamas*, the other practical sections *yoga*, *kriyā*, and *caryā* come into play. The observance and following of prescribed rituals as laid down by the *caryā* and *kriyā* sections, and the training of the mind for undisturbed meditation of Śiva through *yoga* make the soul ascend to the higher state of human consciousness. The soul's ultimate release from the *pāśas*, and the consequent attaining of the state of union with Śiva is then realized through the descent of God's power (*śaktinipāta*) and by means of advanced divine initiation (*dīkṣā*). This is spelled out in the *jñānapāda* of *Rauravāgama* as follows:

Just as darkness quickly disappears when it encounters sunrise, thus, after obtaining initiation, one is freed from merit and demerit (*dharmādharmā*). Just as the sun illuminates these worlds with its rays, thus God shines (becomes manifest) with his powers (*śakti*) in the *mantra* sacrifice. Just as small sparks dart out of the fire, thus the powers come forth from Śiva. When (ritually) urged (used) they reach the bodies of those who aspire to success (*sādhaka*), just as the sun with its rays removes the impurity which is on the earth. Thus the Lord receives those who have been initiated by the combined use of his *śaktis*. Like water thrown into water or milk poured into milk, thus the one who knows the *mantras* obtains oneness merely by initiation. Just as a mass of cotton thrown into a blazing fire is burnt and completely destroyed never to become cotton again, thus. . .the initiated will not be reborn evermore.<sup>35</sup>

The *āgamic* Śaiva Siddhānta is a philosophical system with a practical interest in ritual. The philosophy is mainly found in the *jñānapāda* of the *Āgamas* which deals with the three eternal entities *pati*, *paśu* and *pāśa*; and with related issues such as the doctrine of causation, the thirty-six *tattvas* (principles) etc. Their discussions present the purpose of life as the shedding off of the binding impurities and as the attaining of Oneness with Śiva. The main interest of the *āgamas*, it may be noted however, is not a systematization of philosophical thought. "For their authors the attainment of the highest goal is much more essential than metaphysical speculation."<sup>36</sup> It is in setting forth the concrete

steps for the attainment of the highest ideal of union between God and the soul (*pati* and *paśu*) that we find the theological harmony of the *āgamas*. In other words, the philosophy of the *jñānapāda* is directly linked to a practical concern. The *yoga* practice, the religious practices anchored to rites and rituals elaborately explained in the *kriyā* and *caryā* sections, the detailed descriptions on the construction of temples and other places of worship, minute details on the consecration and installation of deities, all of these topics converge on the question of how to achieve the realization of the unity between the soul and Śiva, the Supreme God. This is the theological harmony linking the various sections (*pādas*) of the *āgamas* which, as we shall see, impressed Tāyumānavar and served as a formative factor in the development of his own *samarasa*-vision. The *caryā*, *kriyā* and *yoga* are oriented towards fixing the right disposition in the soul and then leading the *paśu* (soul) to the likeness of *pati* (God) which is the purpose of life envisaged in the philosophical section (*jñānapāda*) of the *Āgamas*.

### 3. Śaiva Siddhānta as Śuddhādvaita

The second phase of the development of Śaiva Siddhānta thought is led by Meykaṇṭār and his followers mentioned above. This school also recognizes *śruti* (scripture) as the direct revelation from God (Śiva) and holds the view that scriptures are devoid of imperfection and are called *mutal nūl* (primary book). Such are both the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* (SS. VIII.14). The exact relation in which all other sacred literature stands to these 'primary books' is clearly explained by Aruṇanti in his *Supakkam* part of the SS (VIII.14). Of secondary importance are the *smṛtis*: the *Purāṇas*, the *Itihāsa*, the *Śāstras* relating to various arts and sciences (the Sixty-four *kalās*) etc. They constitute the *vali nūl* (Secondary Guide-Books). These "books" are a guide to the *mutal nūl* in the form of explanations, always in accord with the *mutal nūl* yet varying in actual content. The *śārbu nūl* are aid-books and while they differ in many ways they essentially agree with both the *mutal nūl* and *vali nūl*.<sup>37</sup> Of these three kinds of books, the *mutal nūl* (the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*) are incomparable because they were revealed by the perfect eternal God, and Śaiva Siddhānta has its foundation in these sacred revelations from God.

The fundamental doctrine of Meykaṇṭār's *śuddhādvaita* as presented in the opening section (the first three *sūtras*) of *SB* is the same as that of the Āgamic Śaiva Siddhānta, namely, the truth of *tripadārtha* "the triple categories", *pati* (God), *paśu* (soul) and *pāśa* (bond). These three constitute the phenomena of life and existence. However, the new element that is introduced here is the *Advaita* relation between them. What these three categories mean in the literature of the Meykaṇṭār tradition may be briefly discussed here.

The *SB* establishes the existence of God by way of pointing at the 'Agent'. God is the First Cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*) behind the world of the forms of 'he' (*avan*), 'she' (*aval*) and 'it' (*atu*) which undergo creation (*uppati*), conservation (*titi*) and dissolution (*nācam*) (*SB* I.1). The Siddhāntic theory of creation is *satkāryavāda*, according to which the world which is an effect of the cause is already contained in the cause. The causal process is a case of coming-to-be of what already exists in a latent form.

Śiva is the Primal Cause of the world (*SB* I.1) and His cosmic functions are the operations of His *Śakti*, the power of God. God in Himself is the efficient cause, *māyā* and *karma* being the material and instrumental causes respectively (*SB* I.2b and II.2). Although, God is the efficient cause of the world-process, He remains changeless (*SB* I.2c) in his nature. The nature of God is summed up as One, Absolute, Eternal, Pure, Supreme, Qualityless, Infinite Wisdom, Blissful etc. (*Śivappirakāśam*, XIII).

The 'motive' for God's creation, as *SS* states, is love and it is not for His own good but for the benefit of all forms of life (*SS* I.47). The creation of the world is to facilitate the process of "maturing" the impurities (*malas*) that defile the soul beginninglessly. By existing and working in the world the soul's defilements become ripened and ready for removal. Life in the world is a pre-requisite for the dawn of saving knowledge (*jñāna*).

The cosmic functions of God can also be seen as the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* ('definition *per accidens*') of the Supreme. They constitute the 'general knowledge' of God. He is the Cause (*kāraṇa*) of the origin, sustenance and cessation of the world. The world process defines the 'that' of the Supreme.<sup>38</sup> *SS* sets out the *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa* of Śivam as follows:



Ulakelā māki, vēṛay uṭaṇumāy oḷiyāyoṅki  
alakilā vuyirkaḷ, kaṇmattu āṇaiyiṇ amarntu cellat,  
talaivanāy, ivaṛṇin taṇmai taṇakkeytaliṇ ṛit tātē  
nīlavuṇi ramalanāki, niṇṛaṇan nīṅkāteṅkum

The Supreme Being who guides innumerable souls according to His Will and each one's *karma* is One with the universe, and is different and is one-and-different; He is the Transcendent Light; He is the First Cause unaffected by the limitedness of His creatures; He is Self-luminous and pure (devoid of *malas*) and pervades everything. He remains different from nothing. (Siddhiyār, Supakkam, II.1)

This *taṭastha-lakṣaṇa*, as it is clear from the above verse, is the existential and phenomenal description of God which enables one to penetrate into the deeper and essential nature of God. This is possible through meditation, and the resulting intuitive experience (*anubhava*) constitutes the *svarūpa-lakṣaṇa* ("definition *per proprium*") of God. This description takes on a negative form. *SS* states it as follows:

civaṇaru vuruvumallaṇ cittinōṭacittumallaṇ  
pavamutaṇ roḷilkaḷonṇuṇ paṇṇiṭuvāṇu mallan tavamutal  
yōkapōkam tarippava ṇallaṇṇāṇē yivaiperā  
viyaintumonṇu miyaintiṭā viyalpiṇāṇē

Śiva is neither a *rūpi* nor an *arūpi*; neither *cit* nor *acit*. He does not create nor sustain nor perform other functions. He is neither a *yogi* nor a *bhōgi*. Although present in all things and pervading all things inseparably, the Supreme is of a nature different from all these.. (SS, I.70)<sup>39</sup>

With regard to the question, as to whether, or not God has form, *SS* replies using the language of paradox. He has form (*uruvam*), no form (*aruvam*) and He is of formless form (*uruvāruvam*) (*SS*. I.38 and 70). The *SS* verses I.46, 47 and 54 also speak of God assuming forms. The question here is why God takes forms which imply limitations of time and space. These forms, according to the above verses are not material but spiritual forms, symbolic of His love and grace. In *SS* I.54 it is said that unless the Supreme assumes various forms the humans cannot have the manifestations of His five Divine operations (*pañcakr-*

*tyas*) namely *sṛṣṭi* (creation), *sthiti* (preservation), *saṁhāra* (destruction), *tirōbhāva* (concealment), and *anugraha* (grace). All these functions pre-suppose God assuming the form of a person who acts in relation to the creature (*paśu*). Devoid of the Divine manifestation in concrete forms there are neither divine grace nor sacred revelation. The SS I.46 shows the necessity of the Supreme assuming forms, and the next verse (I.47) says His form is gracious Love and His attributes and knowledge are again grace or love. Thus everything is seen through the single frame of love. In I.11.37 the Siddhiyar says the *pañcakṛtyas* of the Divine are acts of His grace. The terms 'grace' (*aruḷ*) and 'love' (*aṇṇu*) are interchangeably used. This is consistent with their usage in Tamil religious literature.<sup>40</sup>

The *pati* of Śaiva Siddhānta is the same as is described in the Upaniṣadic language as "*śivam advaitam caturtham*" (*Māṇḍūkya Up.*, VII). As Śivam, God is Bliss itself. By this is meant that He is infinitely blissful and bestows bliss on all. By using the description as *Advaitam*, His relation with the soul as "inseparable" is indicated. This description is indicative of the unique relationship in which *pati* stands to *paśu*. The Siddhāntic understanding of *pati*, *paśu* and *pāśa* is beautifully summarized in the following words of Umāpati:

palakalaiyākama vētami yāvaiyṇun karuttup  
 patipacupācan terittal patiparamē yatutā  
 ṇilavumaru vuruvinṇik kuṇankuṇika ḷiṇṇi  
 ninmalamā yēkamāy nittamāki  
 yalakiluyirk kunarvāki yacalamāki  
 yakantitamā yāṇantā vuvuvayaṇṇic  
 celavaritāyē celkatiyāyē ciṇṇitākip periṭāyt  
 tikaḷvatutaṇ civamenṇpar teḷintuḷōrē

The leading object of many *kalai-jñānam*, scientific treatises, twenty-eight divine Ākamam, the four Vetham and various other *śāstiram*, is to explain the three eternal entities, *pati*, *paśu*, *pāśam*. *Pati* is *param* (*Brahmah*), Deity. The same is also called *Tat-Śivam*. This deity, the enlightened teacher, is neither purely spiritual, nor embodied; is not possessed of any physical organs; has neither qualities nor names; is ever free from *malam*; is one; and eternal; is the source (or power) of understanding to innumerable souls; is fixed in position;

illimitable in its nature (or immense); exists in the form of *jñānam*; is the form of happiness; is difficult of access to unstable worshippers, but is easily approached by those who worship in the orderly course; and shines as the least of the little, and the greatest of the great. (*Śivappirakāśam*, 14)<sup>41</sup>

*Pati*, understood as *caturtham* (the fourth)<sup>42</sup> is the Being which surpasses the sweep of human consciousness and is realized through integration (*yoga*) as pure Consciousness itself.

*Pāśa*, the bond which accounts for the enslavement of the soul, and from which it stands in need of liberation by Divine grace, is of three kinds, namely *āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā* (*SB I*; II.2c; IV.2). The latter two, namely, *karma* and *māyā* are not only material means for providing locations and bodies and experiences of pleasure and pain needed by the souls, but, they also concurrently accomplish the process of maturing the soul.

*Āṇava* is the primary *mala* which remains with the soul through eternity (*SB I*). Since, it is connected with, *aṇu* (soul) all through eternity it is called *āṇava*. The other *malas* are adventitious, and are conjoined to the *āṇava mala* secondarily. Thus, *āṇava mala* is called *sahaja* (natural) and the other two are called *āgantuka* (those joined later) *malas*. *Āṇava mala* is not merely the absence of knowledge. As a positive principle of darkness, though it is *jaḍa* (unconscious), it serves to hide the soul's inherent powers of knowing, feeling and willing. As *iruḷ malam* (impurity of darkness)<sup>43</sup> it deludes the soul, blinds the vision and hides itself and everything else from the soul. The power of *āṇava mala* is weakened when the soul is led to higher stages of spiritual life and *āṇava mala* ceases to affect the soul when the soul attains *mukti* (*SB X*), its screening powers having been neutralized by the influx of divine light.

*Karma mala* is the bond that underlies the soul's deeds, both accounting for their genesis and providing their consequences (*SBI.2a*). It is a generic name for the fruit of deeds. *SS* says *karma* is the act of the soul in its embodied state (II.10). The acts may be either good or bad and, consequently, there are good *karmas* and bad *karmas* (*SS II.13*). It is the cause for the variety in the bodies taken by the souls and in their bodily experiences. It induces the soul to act through body, mind and speech and thus accumulate the merits and demerits of the



deeds. It is the cause of the soul's experience of pain and pleasure, and it takes the soul into the transmigratory tract (cycles of births and deaths) (*Śivappirakāśam*, 29).

*Karma mala* is subdivided into three branches. This division is made according to the fructification of the deeds of the soul. *Āgāmi* refers to the good and bad deeds one performs during a given particular birth. The fruit of those *karmas* is to be experienced in future births. *Sañcita* is the accumulated *karma* of former births. It is the *karma* carried forward from the time when a deed is done to the time when the fruit of that deed is experienced. *Prārabdha* is the functioning of the accumulated *karma* of former births in the present birth. Thus it is formed out of *sañcita* and is the direct cause of the body in the present life and its actions and pleasures. In a way, we see here a cyclical process of *karma*. The pain or pleasure one experiences as the result of past deeds (*prārabdha*) becomes the source of fresh acts (*āgāmi*). The fruits of such acts are stored in *sañcita* from which in turn emerges *prārabdha*. The ever-recurrent order of *karma* is explained in *SS* II:12:

mēlaikku vittumāki viḷaintavai yuṇavumāki  
 ṇālattu varumāpōla nañceyum viṇaikaḷellā  
 melattān paḷamāc ceyyu mitamāki taṅkaṭ kellā  
 mūlattatāki yenṇum vantaṭu muṇaimai yōṭē

As the fruit of husbandry yields us food for present enjoyment and seed for tomorrow, so also, our acts account for our present enjoyment and form seed, the fruit of which will be enjoyed in a future birth. This is the eternal order of *karma*.<sup>44</sup>

The effect of each action and reaction is continuous and in this sense it seems an everlasting cyclic process. *Kārmic* principle, however, becomes inoperative when the soul attains oneness with Śiva (*SB* X.2a). *Karma mala* now ceases to affect the soul because the acts of the liberated soul are "the acts of God Himself" (*SB*. X.2a and b). Liberation according to Meykaṇṭār, it may be recalled, consists of the realization of non-duality.

Another bond (*pāśa*) which binds the soul is *māyā mala*. This non-intelligent, primordial material principle is eternal and is responsible for cosmic evolution, serving as its material cause. As the cosmic substrate, *māyā* is the material cause of the

universe and the universe exists for the purpose of making possible the eventual redemption of the soul from all bonds. *Māyā*, as the material cause, cannot by itself operate giving rise to the universe. It performs its function but with the aid of an intelligent, efficient cause. It is this *mala* that provides souls with location, instruments and objects of experience (SS II.52). The forms which arise when *māyā* is acted upon by an efficient cause are *tanu* (bodies), *karaṇa* (organs), *bhuvana* (world) and *bhōga* (objects of experience).

*Āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā*, which are thus delusion-causing in different ways, veil the true nature of the soul, produce the illusion of enjoyments and put the souls in bondage. They are inter-related with one another. Their functions may be compared to the sprout (*karma*), bran (*māyā*) and chaff (*āṇava*) in the paddy.<sup>45</sup> Thus we see how the *malas* keep the soul fettered in their physical, moral and spiritual existence. Just as the chaff in the paddy induces the growth of the sprout therein, the *āṇava mala* induces the soul's capacity for experience (efficient cause). We notice that the bran helps the growth of the sprout out of the paddy. *Māyā mala* acts as the accessory (instrumental cause) inducing the soul to experience pleasure and pain with its body (*tanu*), organs (*karaṇa*), world (*bhuvana*) and objects of enjoyment (*bhōga*). Just as the sprout stems from the paddy, the *karmamala* creates and constitutes pleasure, pain and suffering and so it is the material cause.

The three *malas* exist and function in subjection to the power of God. *Māyā* and *karma* are utilized as the means or accessories by which He helps the soul gain release from its bondage. Although *āṇava* and Śiva co-exist in the soul, unlike the soul, Śiva is unaffected by *āṇava*'s presence. Śiva's work upon the *āṇava mala* is by His own will. Through His *aruḥ śakti* (power of grace) He frees the souls from the darkness of *āṇava*. The soul that undergoes the cycle of birth and death, pain and pleasure, under the powerful spell of the *malas* is not eternally left in this peril. The *SB* clearly speaks about the annihilation of the triple fetters which bind the soul. The moment when the soul becomes one with Śiva and realize that all its actions are His actions then *āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā* disappear from the soul:

avanē tănēyākiya aṇṇeri  
yēkaṇāki yīraipaṇi niṛka  
malamāyi taṇṇoṭu valvinai yinṛē

When the soul becomes one with Lord, as the Lord is one with the soul, and dwells in the divine service, then the formidable *karma* (*valiviṇai*), along with the impurity (*āṇava mala*) and *māyā* pass away. (SB X)

This is to show the total annihilation of the *pāśas* in the realization of the oneness (*ekanāki*) of God which expresses itself in practical life as “doing only His will” (*Iraipaṇi nirtal*). The removal of *malas* is beautifully compared to the complete disappearance of darkness in the presence of blazing light (*erikatiriṇ muṇṇiruḷ pol*). (SB X.2e)

The third of the triple categories is the *paśu* (soul). The soul is called *paśu*, because it is bound by *pāśa*, which as we have seen is the principle of ignorance (SS IV.11-20). Śaiva Siddhānta believes in the existence of a countless number of finite souls, an infinity of them. This multitude of souls is figuratively expressed by Umāpati by comparing them to the number of days that are past since evolution and the days that are yet to come:

piṛantanāl mēlum piṛakkunāl pōlun  
tuṛantōr tuṛappōr tokai (*Tiruvārutpayan*).<sup>46</sup>

These souls are eternal and ultimate, immortal and perennial as God Himself.

The soul has its habitation in the body,<sup>47</sup> yet it is independent of the body. The soul is neither the body (SB III.1a), nor sense organs (SB III.3a), nor the inner faculties (SB IV.1a) but that which identifies with them as ‘me’ and ‘mine’. It receives its body from God in accordance with its deeds (*karma*). This body and soul are inseparable. The soul is spiritual (*cittu*) and hence has no form, nor shape nor any other perceptible attribute. It is *arūpa* (formless) and *vibhu* (all-pervasive) (SS IV.20). As a spiritual entity, it exercises the three spiritual functions of *jñāna* (knowing), *icchā* (feeling) and *kriyā* (acting). The eternal intelligence and power of the soul, however, are self-concealed on account of its inherent conjunction with *mala* (*āṇava mala*) (SS IV.20). It is the Siddhānta faith that *āṇava mala* must first become ripe and then it becomes fit for removal; and it is removed from the soul



in *mokṣa*. The freed soul is thus in a state fit for receiving Divine grace which imparts saving *jñāna* (wisdom). With the dawn of *jñāna*, the soul comes into union with God (*pati*).

The soul has a peculiar nature worth noticing. It never stands alone by itself. The soul is always found in association either with darkness or the twilight zone called the world or with the effulgent Light of God. To be associated means that the soul assumes the nature of that with which it is associated. Because of this peculiar nature the soul becomes dark in *kevala* due to the *āṇava mala*; it is individualized while associated with organs, body etc. in *sakala*, and it becomes omnipresent in the *śuddha* state when associated with Śivam. Thus its association is compared to the crystal or mirror which reflects the nature and colours of the object with which it comes into contact, even while it retains its own nature.<sup>48</sup> On account of this nature of the soul becoming that with which it gets associated with, the soul is called *sat-asat* (*SB VII*; *SS VII.2*). The *sat* nature stands for the eternal and never-changing Reality. The soul becomes *sat* while it cognizes the *sat*. The *asat* nature of the soul is that which in consequence of identification with *asat* undergoes change in its condition. One may thus see a certain similarity between the soul's life in *asat* and its life in *sat* though resulting in experiences as divergent as bondage and liberation.

Śaiva Siddhānta conceives of a hierarchical order among souls, namely, *viññānakalas*, *pralayākalas* and *sakalas* (*SB VIII.2*; *SS VIII.2*). This, of course, is part of the *Śaivāgama* doctrine. The difference in their place in the order is due to a function of the number of *malas* that defile them. At the top of the hierarchy is the *viññānakalas*. These souls are believed to be impaired only by *āṇava mala*. Certain classes of souls either belong to or have ascended through spiritual discipline to this order, which is above the sphere of influence of *karma* and *māyā*. This is the region of *śuddha māyā* and the souls in this order are mature and fit for the final operation of Śiva's grace. With the dawning of Divine grace from within, the *āṇava* is cast off and the soul is released from all the binding forces. The second order is the *pralayākalas* who are tainted by both *āṇava* and *karma malas*, but are free from *māyāmala*. These are the souls which exist in the state of cosmic dissolution. When there is fresh evolution, it becomes *sakala* being alerted by *karma mala*. At the bottom of

the order is the *sakalas*, the full-fledged empirical souls, who are defiled (infected) by all the three *malas* (*āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā*). Release for *pralayākala* and *sakala* souls is effected differently in accordance with the difference in the nature of their bonds. To the *pralayākala* souls God appears in His celestial form when their two *malas* have become ripe, and in the case of the *sakala* souls God assumes the form of a human teacher (*guru*). The latter, through the mediation of the Scripture and the Tradition (*sampradāya*), inculcate saving knowledge.

The soul bound by the triple impurities of *āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā* (*malas*) is not left for ever in darkness. When the soul is made "fit", by way of casting off the impurities, the saving knowledge (*jñāna*) is imparted and the soul is liberated from the bondage caused by the *malas*. *SB* VIII speaks of this saving process. The souls through *tapas* advance in spiritual life. *Tapas* here signifies the three Śaiva paths viz. *caryā*, *kriyā* and *yoga* (*SB* VIII). Diligent following of the above paths hastens the "ripening" of the impurities. The soul is now prepared in a state fit for the descent of God's grace (*śakti*). It is at such a conjunction of factors that God appears as *Guru* and imparts knowledge (*jñāna*). It is the Siddhāntic understanding that through Divine grace the bonds of *āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā* are cast out once and for all and the soul attains supreme *jñāna*, which is true liberation (*SP* VI.2). In this state of perfection the soul enjoys communion with Śiva (*śivatvam*) and experiences bliss in its life. This experiential oneness, which marks the substance of release, is what is described as *śuddhādvaita*.

The soul (*paśu*) released from all the binding forces enters into a new relation with the Supreme. It is a kind of relation, which subsists between two distinct things which now become non-dual (*advaita*) by the power of intimate association. *SB* introduces the notion of Advaita in two different contexts. The first context is *sūtra* II, while talking about Śivam as causing the fivefold cosmic operations for redeeming the soul from bondage. The expression *avaiyē tāṇeyāy* in *sūtra* II reflects the unique relation in which God stands as He performs the cosmic functions of creation etc. The second context is *sūtra* XI which describes *mokṣa* which consists in the soul realizing its non-dual relation with Śivam. When the soul enters the life of *mokṣa* or when "in ceaseless, unwavering love, the soul unites to Śiva's Feet" (*ayarā anpiṇṇ aran*



*kaḷal celumē*) (SB XI), it is said to accomplish 'integration with Śivam' (*Śivayōgam*). Just as Śiva is and has been 'non-dual' with the soul in its life in the world-standing one with it although hidden from its purview—the soul in *Śivayōga* becomes in its experience of union with Śiva 'non-dual', surrendering its sense of 'I do' and even its very sense of being an 'I'.

In the unique relationship expressed in "God is one, different, one and different with the world" (*ulakela māki verāy, uṭanumāy*) (SS II.1), we find three kinds of relationships viz., *abheda* (non-difference between soul and God), *bheda* (difference between soul and God) and *bhedābheda* (difference and non-difference between soul and God). The kind of oneness Śaiva Siddhānta speaks about is different from the above kind of relations although it admits *bheda* only in the sense of a relation between the eyes and the sun in seeing; the *abheda* relation exists to the extent to which there is identity between soul and body. Likewise the *bhedābheda* relation is true, in the sense of the relation that we find between the seeing soul and its eyesight.<sup>49</sup> To these three kinds of relations, thus distinguished and held together at the same time, Meykaṇṭār draws our attention in his illustrative verse under the Twelfth *sūtra*:

For the enlightened He is not other than the world, He is not one with the world, He is not both other than and one with the world. But because the relation is non-duality, which includes all these three, all things are His form. Nevertheless, thou who knowest the truth of non-duality, worship in love.<sup>50</sup>

This non-dual relation between soul and God is *śuddhādvaita* according to Meykanta, and the one who 'knows the truth of non-duality' is described by him as an *attuviti* (Advaitin).

Umāpati Śivācārya finds the greatness of Śaiva Siddhānta precisely in its interpretation of Advaita which he characterizes as "true and pure". Śaiva Siddhānta is hailed by him in this non-dual sense in view of this unique interpretation of Advaita:

We expound here the beauty of Śaiva Siddhānta, the cream of the Vedānta, the excellent beauty of which consists in its exposition of the Advaita, postulating an inseparable relation, like body and soul, eye and sun, and soul and eye, and supported by the teaching on *Dharma* of the books of the highest



authority. This Advaita is unlike the theories of other schools which postulate the *bheda* relationship as it exists between light and darkness, the *bhedābheda* relationship existing between word and meaning, and the *abheda* relationship between gold and the ornament. Our doctrine of Advaita is supported by perfectly logical methods and it is the light to the truthseekers and darkness to others.<sup>51</sup>

The inseparable union that exists between God and soul as shown above is pure Advaita (*śuddhādvaita*). Advaita does not mean here 'one' (*ekam*) in the sense of being literally without a second (*SB* II.1; *SS* II.2). The very thought of 'one' implies the idea of a second thing, that which thinks of it as one. Advaita here, therefore, means 'not two' and it avows the soul's inseparable oneness with God while denying "separate existence and separability of God and soul".<sup>52</sup> This Advaita relation as understood by Śaiva Siddhānta in terms of 'One' and 'Second' may be well explained as follows:

Advaita, according to Śaiva Siddhānta, affirms neither the absence of a Second (monism) nor implies the being of a Second (dualism), but affirms only the Secondless of the Second. What appears to be Second to *Brahman* the order of existence is, nevertheless not essentially second to it, because *Brahman* is Presence involving union, pervasion and relation. What is therefore denied of the two is their otherness which alone furnishes the basis for duality and what is affirmed by implication, is their inseparability, inalienability . . .<sup>53</sup>

Advaita is also seen as a relation characterized as *ananya* (non-difference): *attuvita menṇa collē anniya nāttiyai yunarttumāyittu* —The word Advaita itself points to non-difference (*anniyānātti*) (*SB* II.1). *Ananyam* (in-separability/non-difference) denotes the intimate and inseparable relation between God and soul. According to this unique relation, although there exists a difference in substance, no separation is possible.

The *SS* uses the term *ananya* in a few places to denote the Advaita relation between God and soul. The soul being liberated from the bonds of impurities (*malas*) and assisted by Divine grace perceives the Supreme God as *ananya*: *arūḷinālē yananiya*

*mākak kānpaṇ* (SS VI.6). Advaita understood as non-difference (*ananya*) between God and soul, is further found in SS:

As God is not different from the soul, as He is in the soul, and as He is the thinker of all the soul's thoughts, as in Him there is no distinction of "I" and "mine".<sup>54</sup>

The Advaita relation of God and soul, according to the author of SS, is thus again a case of oneness without a second, but in the sense of inseparable unity. This inseparable unity does not mean that the soul becomes God or that God becomes the soul. The ultimate Reality is One in the sense of being 'one' with the souls, but at the same time is different from the soul. Aruṇanti summarizes this unique relation in his other work *Irupavirupatu*<sup>55</sup> as "*onrā kāmal-irantākāmal onṇumiraṇtu minṇākāmal*" —"neither one nor two, nor both, nor again is it a negation of either."

Advaita relation is sometimes called *tādātmya*. The Siddhāntic use of *tādātmya* (identity) is different from that of the Advaita of Śaṅkara, where *tādātmya* is used for the *appearance* of one thing as two (*mithyā tādātmya*). According to Siddhānta, in *tādātmya* relation two things become one by the power of intimate association (*atu atu ata*).<sup>56</sup>

Advaita whether understood as *aṇanya* or as *tādātmya*, represents the heart of the God-soul relation, and implies the negation of all factors that seem to intervene and stand between and alienate man from the divine ground. It is the affirmation of the inalienable indwelling of God within man.<sup>57</sup>

*Śuddhādvaita* is thus the unique interpretation of Advaita by the Siddhānta School of Meykaṇṭa and his followers. The way it is understood by them may be presented in the following words:

Śaiva Siddhānta on account of its interpretation of the Advaita in an "unqualified" sense as meaning inseparable, non-dual existence, is called *śuddhādvaita*. The term "*śuddha*" is not understood on par with *viśiṣṭa* or *kevala* as introducing some qualification to the notion of Advaita but as 'qualifying' Advaita negatively as unqualified...<sup>58</sup>

The point made here is that Advaita purports to address not the question of number but the nature of God as related to the soul.

The soul's destiny consists in realizing that relationship in which it stands in union with God.

#### V. *Tāyumānavar and Śaiva Siddhānta*

While analyzing Tāyumānavar's religious poems (Chapter III), we have seen the tenets of Śaiva Siddhānta interspersed in those hymns. A few significant ideas may be singled out here in the light of the presentation of the basic tenets of Śaiva Siddhānta understood as *Śaivāgamas* and also as *Śuddhādvaita*. Focusing on some of these ideas in Tāyumānavar's hymns will help to highlight his drift towards *samarasam* which will be explained in the next chapter.

How close Tāyumānavar stands in relation to Śaiva faith may be brought out by referring to a host of statements that he makes in his hymns. In them he seems in effect to say not merely that Śaiva faith is very special but that it is indeed the faith:

caivacamayamē camayam camayātītap paḷam poruḷai  
kaivantīṭavē maṇṇuḷ veḷikāttum intakaruṭṭai viṭṭu  
poyvantuḷalum camayanēṇi pukutavēṇṭām muttitarum  
teyvacapaiyaik kāṇpataṅkuc cēravaram cakattire

Śaiva religion alone is the religion. In order to grasp, in realization, the ancient Truth which truly transcends all religions, do not pursue the paths of religions that often labour under the guidance of falsehood overlooking the Supreme Truth which is disclosed by the idea of vacuity or space. In order to enjoy this vision of the liberation-giving hall of divine Reality, come and assemble ye people of the world.

(XXX.2)

Tāyumānavar thus enthrones *Śaivam* as the crown of all faiths and he considers other systems faulty since they ignore the inner truth and become absorbed in external lies (*poy*). In XIV.10 the poet-saint says that the *Vedāgamas* and the *Vedāṅgas*<sup>59</sup> bow down before the supreme Vedānta's crown (Śaiva Siddhānta) where alone is found the blessed harmony and ecstatic love: "It is beautiful (*aḷakiṭu*) indeed, namely, the picture of *vaidika śaivam*, i.e. the Śaivam which is the essence of the *Veda*, being seated on the elevated throne wearing the crown of silence on its head, the six limbs of the *Veda* bow in veneration before it."



The point of interest to be noted here is that the poet-saint defines *Śaivism* not as a religion in the sense of an “ism” but as a point of convergence where the different traits of other creeds (XIV:12) merge. In this sense he holds that *Śaivism* represents the highest and most perfect stage in the evolution of Hindu religious thought. Referring to the above hymn R. Shanmugam Pillai interprets him as holding that “Śaivism is the universal state for all to enter and assume the bliss which each likes.”<sup>60</sup>

Tāyumānavar as one may see from his description of *Śaivism* as *Vaidika Śaivism* followed both the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*. According to the saint the *Vedas* are the paths, the *Āgamas* are the horse, and Śiva is the guiding hand which makes one proceed wonderfully on the path:

āraṇamārkkat ākamavāci  
arputamāy naṭanṭaruḷum  
kāraṇamuṇarttum kaiyum niṇ meyyum  
kaṇkaḷmūṇṟuṭaiya eṇkaṇṇe  
pūraṇa aṇivil kaṇṭilam atanāl  
pōṇṇippuntiyōṭ iruntu  
tāraṇi uḷlamaṭṭumē vaṇaṅka  
tamiyaṇēṇ vēṇṭiṭattakumē

Oh the three-eyed One who is my Light, your hand and body explain that the *Vedas* are the road and the *Āgamas*, like horses, wonderfully proceed on that path. Yet, I have not fully realized it. Therefore, I beseech Thee that I should worship Thee by praising with this mind as long as I live on this earth with this *buddhi*. (XIX:1)

The importance of this verse is that it shows the complementary nature of the *Veda* and the *Āgama*. The *Vedas* stand for the general enunciation of the Truth and the *Āgamas* stand for the more specific approach to those truths in life. The aptest analogy used here is that the *Vedas* are more like the road and the *Āgamas* are like the horses that gallop on the road. The road helps one to walk swiftly and wonderfully. The point that Tāyumānavar makes here is that the hand, the bodily form and the three eyes (*kaiyum niṇ meyyum kaṇkaḷ mūṇṟum*) which are all peculiar to Śiva indicate this profound insight about the complementariness of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*. By hand is

meant the gesture, called *cinmudrā*.<sup>61</sup> Śiva in His form as the Teacher under the banyan tree (*Dakṣiṇāmurti*) imparts instruction through the mode of the *cinmudrā*. *Cinmudrā* indicates the central truth of the *Āgamas* (Śaiva Siddhānta), namely, the *paśu* disaffiliating itself from the three kinds of *pāśas* (*āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā*) and uniting itself with *pati* which is the support and the basis for both *paśu* and *pāśa*. Likewise, the physical forms which are spoken of and enunciated for the purpose of worship in the *Āgamas* are all indicative of the indispensable nature of the *Āgamas*. And how they complement the more general ideas of worship or *upāsana* is found in the *Vedas*. The vision of three eyes also indicate Śiva as the giver of life in the world, the two eyes standing for day and night, and also of His being the giver of salvation, which is indicated by his third-eye which is knowledge.

In another hymn the poet-saint laments the inaccessibility of the full truth of the sacred *Śāstras*, both the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*:

curutiye civākamaṅkaḷe uṅkalāl collum  
oru tanipporuḷ aḷavaḷ iteṇṇā vāyuntō  
porutiraik kaṭanuṇmanal eṇṇinum pukalak  
karuta eṭṭiṭa niṇaiporuḷ aḷavaḷ yārkaṇpār

Oh! the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*, is it possible to define by measurement (by logic, disputes and reasoning) that One and Unique Substance which is explained by You? Even if one succeeds in counting the tiny sand particles on the seashore, who can measure and define the fullness of the great One which is beyond speech and thought? (XXIV:18)

In this verse one can see that Tāyumanavar speaks of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* in their hyphenated form as revelations alike which speak of the immeasurable and the unique Reality. Despite the fact that the *Āgamas* provide access to the Vedic truths and complement the Vedic revelation by making it closer to the concerns of the aspirants, the Truth itself revealed therein remains inaccessible to the powers of logic and language. It is only through experiencing (*anubhava*) the Truth disclosed in the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* that one may have access to it.

Tāyumanavar holds that truth and perfect bliss are to be found





out as the essence of Siddhānta the meeting point of Vedānta and Siddhānta and all other religions. There are thirty-one hymns<sup>64</sup> where the poet-saint uses the word Siddhānta to signify the ultimate goal of this form of faith and to re-establish its superiority as inclusive of and transcending particular faiths of religion. Of those thirty-one hymns, in fourteen cases he uses Siddhānta together with Vedānta in order to show the harmony between the two, and in seventeen cases he uses Siddhānta alone to establish its superiority.

These special hymns convey cardinal thoughts of the poet on Śaiva Siddhānta regarded as an all-inclusive faith. Some of these hymns extol the supreme Truth of Siddhānta, which is the point of convergence in the midst of the multiplicity of sectarian disputes. This is clearly outlined in the very opening hymn, also a very popular one:

an̄k-in̄k eṇātapati yeṇkum pirakācamāy  
 āṇantapūrttiyāki  
 aruḷoṭu niṇaintatetu taṇṇaruḷvelikkulē  
 aḷilāṇṭakōṭi ellām  
 taṇkumpaṭik kiccaivait tuyirkkuyirāy  
 taḷaittat etu maṇavākkiṇil  
 taṭṭāmal ninṇat etu camayakōṭikaḷ elām  
 tanteyvam eṇteyvam eṇru  
 eṇkum toṭarnt etirvaḷakkiṭavum ninṇat etu  
 eṇkaṇum peruvaḷakkāy  
 yātiṇumvalla oru cittāki in̄pamāy  
 eṇṇaikkum uḷḷat etumēl  
 kaṇkulpakal aṇaṇiṇṇa ellai uḷat etu atu  
 karuttiṇk icaintat aṭuvē  
 kaṇṭaṇa elām mōnavuru veliyatākavum  
 karuti aṇcalicey kuvām

What is that which is not confined to 'here' or 'there', but pervades all space as boundless bliss and all-filling splendour? What is that which exists as Life of life, willing the entire universe to abide in the space of its grace? What is that which stands beyond the reach of thought and words? What is that which stands unaffected while myriads of religions eternally debate and claim it to be 'our God', 'their God'? What is that which is eternally everywhere and ever remains as the *cit* of

everything, the embodiment of bliss and the subject of endless contentions? Further, what is that which has for its region where neither day nor night is found? That Subject alone is worthy of thought. Therefore, let us meditate and worship that Subject perceiving all we see as of the form of the unspeakable one (*maunam*). (I.1)

That point of convergence, spoken of here as beyond religious dispute and contention, is *mukti* (IV:1-XI; XLIII:19); *mauna* (IV:4; IX:10); *śivānupūti* (V:4); *samarasam* (II:5). All these abstruse and subtle terms point to a Supreme state—the endless abiding of the soul at the sacred Feet of Supreme Śiva. *Mukti* is the final beatitude emerging from the soul's absorption with God. It is the endless felicity and everlasting happiness springing forth as the release of the soul from transmigration:

muttānta vīti mularitoḷumaṇṇparukkē  
cittānta vītaruntēvē parāparamē

Devotees who are on the way to release worship Thy lotus Feet. Oh Lord Thou dost appear to them in the path of Siddhāntam. (XLIII:19)

In the section *Cinmayānantaguru* (Divine Master of Cognitive Bliss) (IV:1-XI), all the hymns conclude with two affirmations, namely, Śiva is the bestower of *mukti*, and *mokṣa* is the end of Siddhānta:

...  
cittāntanta muttimutalē  
cirakiri viḷaṅkuvaru takṣināmūrttiyē  
cinmayāṇṇṭakuruvē

Oh Thou who art the bestower of *mukti* as prescribed in Siddhānta. Oh Thou who art the Lord of the South, shining upon the hill of Śiva (Tirucchirappalli). Oh Thou who are the *Guru* of Consciousness and Bliss.

Another term Tāyumnānavar uses in his hymns to denote the highest, sublime state of perfection is *mauna* (stillness). In IV:4 the poet-saint praises God for creating the objects of the universe, consciousness and revealing the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*.

By way of conclusion to these praises the poet says that God has created a number of religions, and beyond those religions, the *mauna* state which is the converging point of all religions :

aivakaiyeṇum pūtamātiyai vakuttatanuḷ  
 acara-cara pētamāṇa  
 yāvaiyum vakuttu nallaṇivaiyum vakuttu maṇai  
 āti nūlaiyum vakuttu  
 caivamutalām aḷavil camayamun vakuttu mēl  
 camayaṅkaṭanta mōṇa  
 camaracam vakuttanī unnai nān aṇukavum  
 taṇṇaruḷ vakukkavilaiyō  
 poy vaḷarum neñciṇarkaḷ kāṇāta kāṭciyē  
 poyyilā meyyar aṇivil  
 pōtaparipūraṇa akaṇṭitākāramāyp  
 pōkkuvaravaṇṇa poruḷē  
 teyvamaṇai muṭivāṇa piraṇavacorūpiyē  
 cittānta muttimutalē  
 cirakiri viḷaṅkavaru ṭakṣiṇāmūrttiyē  
 cinmayāṇantakuruvē

You are the creator of the five kinds of elements and everything that is animate and inanimate. Thou hast imparted true knowledge and hast spoken the Vedic lore, and Thou hast formulated endless religions starting with Śaivism and hast revealed *mauna samarasam* (where all religions merge) which is beyond all (created religions). And will you not grant grace so that I can come unto Thee? Oh that vision which is veiled to persons in whose hearts falsehood grows. Oh eternal Reality, not liable to births and deaths, and being of the form of the impartite and the ever full awareness in the knowledge of those of truth devoid of any untruth. Oh Thou art of the *praṇava* form, the end of the divine *Veda*, Thou are the bestower of *mukti* as prescribed in the Siddhānta. Oh Thou who art the Lord of the South, shining upon the hill of Śiva (Tiruchirappalli). Oh Thou who are the *Guru* of Consciousness and Bliss (*ānanda*).

(IV:4)

This *mauna* which he esteems so much is a blissful state where the Supreme peacefulness reigns. It is the firm belief of the poet that all religions must seek after this conciliatory and blessed



state where they will experience harmony. It is a challenge to religious [faiths because it is beyond their ordinary reach—"cama-yam kaṭanta mōnam"—and they have to seek beyond to realize that state of *mauna* which is the truth of Siddhānta. The state of *mauna* is the self-controlled situation of the devotee who has become absorbed and lost in Divine contemplation. This is explicitly stated by the poet in hymn IX:10 where Tāyumānavar seeks the presence or the indwelling of the Supreme God. His dwelling is not in the summit of the universe; it is neither in the region of the sun nor the moon; it is neither in the idols people worship nor in the creatures of this world; the true dwelling place of the Divine is in the heart of the devotee who has become immersed in Him through contemplation. This *mauna* state, and the indwelling of the Divine, is also the central theme of the hymn which has already been translated above.

Siddhānta is the experiencing of *śivānupūti* (V:4). *Anupūti* (Skt. *anubhūti*) is the experience of superhuman knowledge obtained from Śiva.<sup>65</sup> This boon, obtained from God, leads the soul to final bliss. In this state of God-experience all the differences which exist among various religious faiths cease. In V:4 the poet says that in the "*śivānupūti*" both Vedānta and Siddhānta are one.<sup>66</sup> Siddhāntam, according to the poet, is *samarasam* (II:5). *Samarasam*, here, is understood as the realization of truth and the experience of oneness. In this experience of absolute unity—Advaita union—the soul realizes that its activities are divine actions and the soul experiences itself as inseparable from the Divine:

canatatamum eṇatu ceyal niṇatu ceyal yāṇ enun  
tanmai niṇai aṇṇi illāt  
tanmaiyāl veḷalēn vētānta cittānta  
camaracacupāvam ituvē  
intanilai teḷiya nān nekkuruki vāṭiya  
iyaṅkai tiruvuḷam aṇṇiyumē  
innilaiyilē caṇṇu irukkaēṇṇāl maṭamai  
itacatruvākavantu  
cintaikuṭi koḷḷutē malamāyaikaṇmam  
tirumpumō toṭuvalakkāy  
cenmam varumō enavum yōcikkutē maṇatu  
cīrattai eṇum vāḷum utavi

pantamaṛa meyññāna tīramumtaṇtu enai  
 pātukāṭṭ aruḷ ceykuvāy  
 pārkkum iṭameṇkum oru nikkamaṛa niṛaikinṛa  
 paripūraṇāṇantamē

My action is always Thy action. The nature of my self does not exist apart from Thee. Therefore I am not different from Thee. This indeed is the nature and essence of Vedānta and Siddhānta *samarasa*. How much I longed for, with melted heart, the realization of this state (state of non-difference) is known to Thy Divine Mind. When I am asked to be in this condition for a while, ignorance (*maṭamai*) comes as an enemy within and settles down in my mind and the mind ponders: will the *malas*—the *māyā mala* and *karma mala* pursue me and will birth continue perpetually? Therefore protect me by offering grace (*pātukāṭṭ aruḷcey*) which is the sword and the true knowledge (the valour of true knowledge) to uproot attachment (bondage). Oh everfilling Bliss that is omnipresent and seen everywhere one looks. (II:5)

Siddhānta is understood, by the poet-saint in the above hymns, as culminating in the concepts of *mokṣa*, *mukti*, *mauna*, *śivānubhūti* and *samarasam*. This is the highest goal—the point of convergence—where all religions can merge just like the waters of various rivers merge in the vast ocean.

Although this experiential state seems impossible to attain, the poet-saint makes it clear that, it is an attainable state (XXX.2). He warns that no one should give up the idea of attaining that blissful liberation. Tāyumanavar offers hope and inspires people by enumerating those great souls of Śaiva Siddhānta who have already attained the Siddhānta goal.

The whole section of *Cittarkaṇam* (The Assembly of Siddhars) (VIII:1-10) is a tribute to *Siddhars* who, according to the poet, are great in their spiritual powers, are kings of *yoga*, and are souls who have attained the eminent condition of Siddhānta.

The Siddhānta goal, which is always craved for by the saint, is attained in the divine contemplation. In VI:7 he refers to Mārkaṇḍeya and Sukar<sup>67</sup> as two great sages who realized the great Siddhānta truth:

cantatamum vētamoḷi yātonṛu paṛṛiṇ atu  
 tānvantu muṛṛum eṇalal

cakamītu iruntālum maraṇam unṭu enpatu  
 catāniṭṭar niṇaivatu illai  
 cintai aṇi yārkkku ītu pōtippatu allavē  
 ceppinum vekutarkkamām  
 tivyakuṇa mārkkkaṇṭar cukar āti muṇivōrkaḷ  
 cittaṇṭa nityaralarō  
 intrātiṭēvataikaḷ piramātikaṭavuḷar  
 irukku ātivēta-munivar  
 eṇṇariya kaṇanātar nava nātacittarkaḷ  
 iravimati ātiyōrkaḷ  
 kantaruvar kiṇṇararkaḷ maṇṇaiyarkaḷ yāvarum  
 kaikuvittiṭu teyvamē  
 karutariya ciṇṇapayil āṇaṇtanirttamiṭu  
 karunākarakkaṭavulē

The *Vedas* say that if one holds on to a thing one will attain that thing. Therefore, those who are always in *niṣṭha* never think of death even while they live on this earth. This cannot be taught to the unrealized ones. Even if one attempts to explain (that) it will generate only debate. Are not the divine sages Mārkaṇḍeya, Sukar etc. the eternal ones (eternal ones because they realized that the Siddhānta Truth goes beyond the mind)? Oh God, you are worshipped by deities beginning with Indra, by gods beginning with Brahmā, also by sages well-versed in the *Vedas*, and by countless *gaṇas*, the nine *Siddhas*, Sun and Moon, Gandharvas and Kinnaras and many others. Oh merciful Lord who does the blissful dance in the hall of pure Consciousness which is beyond the reach of thought. (VI:7)

Following the teachings of his preceptors, and being inspired by those great souls (*vittaka cittar*), the poet-saint cries out for the great gift of realization of the Siddhānta goal. He prays for that ecstasy of perceiving the supreme stage of unity between Vedānta and Siddhānta. This is the realization of God in His absoluteness devoid of form and attributes, which is beyond the reach of the religions and beyond human mind and tongue. That supreme stage is the state of identifying oneself with God as Love where dualism is no more visible and this is the *anubhava* state of the soul which is the true end of Siddhāntam. This “*samarasa śivānu-pūti*” praised in the hymn V:3 has already been explained above.



The poet moved by the highest goal of Siddhānta praises Siddhānta and as a faithful follower of his faith says “Śaiva religion alone is the religion” (*caiva camayamē camayam*) (XXX:2). It is here that the poet-saint experiences “*paramānupūti*” (IV:9) and “*atuvitānantam*” (XVII:7) the experience of being one with Śiva. The poet praises that great light of Siddhānta as the thought of all thoughts and the life of every life which is impartially present in all things. Tāyumānavar is of the conviction that the faithful and beloved devotees of Śiva will experience the flow of inestimable and blissful nectar and will “see” Him devoid of all forms and attributes:

yātu maṇam niṇaiyum anta niṇaivukku niṇaivāki  
yātiṇpālum  
pēta maṇa niṇṇu uyirukkuyirāki anparukkē  
pērāṇantak  
kōtil amutu ūṇṇarumpik kuṇam kuṇi yonṇaṇat aṇṇai  
koṭuttukkāṭṭum  
tītil parāparamāṇa cittāntappēroliyai  
cintaiceyvām

I meditate on the glorious Light of Siddhānta, in which there is no evil, the Thought which the mind thinks (thought of all thoughts), the Life of all life existing without distinction in all objects. (I meditate on) the source of the flawless flow of blissful nectar to its loving followers. (I meditate on) that which is revealing itself to them (faithful followers) as formless and devoid of qualities. (III:2)

Tāyumānavar, in IV:7, calls his faith *arumaiperu pukaḷpeṇṇa cittāntam* (the precious and renowned siddhāntam). This is precious and eminent because *Dakṣiṇāmūrti*, the eternal guru, manifests Himself to his devotees and purifies the carnal body with the fire of wisdom. The Divine grace transforms one's life just as the alchemist's solution purifies the gross and unrefined gold into the finest gold:

karumaruvu kukaiyaṇaiya kāyattin naṭuvuḷ  
kaḷimputōy cempaṇaiya yāṇ  
kāṇṭaka irukka niṇāṇa aṇal mūṭṭiyē  
kanivupeṇa uḷḷurukki

paruvamat aṛintu niṇ aruḷāṇa kuḷikaikoṭu  
 paricittu vēti ceytu  
 pattumārṛut taṅkamākkiyē paṇikonṭa  
 pakṣattai eṇ colluvēṇ  
 arumaiperu pukaḷperṛa vētanta cittāntam  
 ātiyām antamītum  
 attuvita nilaiyarāye ṇṇai āṇtu unṇaṭimai  
 āṇavarkaḷ aṇivin ūṭum  
 tīrumaruvu kallāl aṭikkīḷum vaḷarkinṇa  
 cittānta muttimutalē  
 cīrakiri viḷaṅkavaru takṣiṇāmūrttiyē  
 eṇmayānanta kuruvē

Thou dost stand non-dual in the good and renowned Vedānta and Siddhānta as the beginning as well as the end. Thou art found in the hearts of Thy followers who have made themselves Thy slaves and become Thy true devotees and Thou redeemed me. While I existed in the body that comes out of the womb, I lie hidden as copper ensconced in the dross. Thou didst establish the fire of *jñāna* thoroughly melting my heart. At the right point Thou didst touch me with the alchemist's solution of Thy grace and transmuted me into pure gold. How can I praise you for this act of compassion? Oh Thou who flourishes under the banyan tree. Oh Thou who art the Lord, of the South Shining upon the hill of Śiva (*Tiruchirappally*). Oh Thou who art the *guru* of Consciousness and Bliss (*ānanda*). (IV:7)

The role of the teacher is compared to that of an alchemist. The underlying assumption of alchemy is that the base metal becomes, when purged of its dross, transmuted into gold because of its original affinity with it. This reflects the Siddhānta doctrine that the soul which has intrinsically its affinity as *cit* with Śivam, however, remains beginninglessly obscured by *malam* (impurity).

Tāyumānavar, the true follower of Śaiva Siddhānta thus understood, figuratively perceives his religion as the very fertile and productive land for the soul's growth and fructification. *Mukti* is a state of consciousness and the experiencing of this *avasthā* is the culmination of a gradual process. The process of realization can be compared to seed sown in the land, its sprouting, growing and bearing fruit. In order to produce the maximum

yield, the soil must be very fertile. Our poet-saint and mystic compares Śaiva Siddhānta to the best, most fertile soil for the soul to grow to maturity (*malaparipākam*) and find its fulfilment in Śiva-Enjoyment (*śivabhōgam*). This is expressed in the following hymn:

muttānta vittē muḷaikkū nilamāyeḷunta  
cittānta māṛkkac ciṟappē parāparamē

Oh most Supreme Being, the seed of *mukti*, the path of Siddhānta is the fertile soil for the sprouting of Thy seed.

(XLIII:365)

In XLIII:206, which was discussed above, the poet sees the delightful silence (*mōna nalam*) as the goal of both Vedānta and Siddhānta. While Vedānta, here, is seen as the general system, Siddhānta, according to the poet, is the special one. Vedānta is, according to the poet, a stepping-stone and an ornament to Siddhānta which is special for Tāyumanavar.<sup>68</sup> One may recall here that, Tirumūlar said that the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* are both inspired and the difference between them is that the *Vedas* are general and the *Āgamas* are special (*Tirumantiram*, 2397). It may, thus, be seen that the idea of *samarasam*, which will be thematically explained in the next chapter, is already present as part of the very meaning of Siddhāntam.

It has already been said that the family background of the poet-saint was Śaivite and he was brought up in the Śaiva religious faith. In the introductory chapter and elsewhere I have pointed out that Tāyumānavar was a Śaiva Siddhāntin. The religiosity of his parents, his quest for the Supreme Truth, his initiation into the teachings of the *ācāryas* of Śaiva Siddhānta by the *Mauna Guru*, his singing of the glory and praise of God Śiva and the preceptors of Śaiva religion, his delving deep into the doctrines of Śaiva Siddhānta, and his exaltation of Śaiva religion in his hymns are enough to convince one that Tāyumānavar was a steadfast Śaiva Siddhāntin.

Śaiva Siddhānta, as explained above, based on the authoritative works like *SB*, *SS*, *Śivappirakāśam* and other basic works of the school, is indeed the Siddhānta of Tāyumānavar as found in his hymns. Tāyumānavar—although he himself does not speak like a theologian of Śaiva Siddhānta tradition—is a true Śaiva Siddhāntin who had delved deep into all the tenets of his religion.



This has been shown in the third chapter of this work. His comprehension of the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas*, his acquaintance with the works of the preceptors of his religion, and his prayerful meditation on the truths of Śaiva religion account for his role as an ardent and faithful follower of Śaiva Religion. A deeper perception of the eternal truths with the help of the *mauna guru*, and a Divine grace-assisted leap into the mystery of blissful wisdom, granted him a mystical God-experience and a philosophical insight into the hidden dimensions of Śaiva religion. His hymns are an attempt to give expression to that mystical experience and philosophical intuition. The grasp of the tenets of the faith of Śaivism and the contemplation on its truth leads to his personalizing of the truth of the religion. It is on this level that we find Tāyumānavar to be a great mystic within Śaiva Siddhānta. The personal experience of the Divine truth of his religious tradition helped him to express the abstruse and subtle thought in simple language. As a Śaiva Siddhānta scholar, Subramaniam Pillai, puts it: "he is remarkable for the clear grasp of abstruse doctrines and for the dexterity with which he clothed them in popular words."<sup>69</sup>

The way he praises the ultimate Truth of his religion as found in the *Vedas* and the *Āgamas* and the reverence he shows to the Saint Founders, the line of Teachers and other great *gurus* of the tradition convince one that Tāyumānavar was one of the great Śaiva Siddhāntins of his time. What makes Tāyumānavar distinct from others is his own God-experience. It is this personal experience that he refers to when he speaks of *mokṣa* and *mukti* (IV: 1, 8, 9-11); "*Śivānuputī*" (V:4) ; *Śivapōkam*" (XXX:3); "*attuvitānantam*" (XVII:7) and "*paramānupūti*" (IV:9). He invites everyone to experience that blissful and tranquil state. As a Śaiva Siddhāntin he says that Śaiva religion is the best place (XLIII:365) to experience that *attuvitānantam*—the bliss of being one with Śivam. This God-experience, as we shall see, is the centripetal force binding Vedānta and Siddhānta. The convergence of Vedānta and Siddhānta at the point of *advaitānandam* is Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam*, which will be taken up for further elaboration in the following chapter.

#### NOTES

1. It is also called *dvaitādvaita* (dualistic non-dualism). See S. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1948),

p. 751. Also see S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Vol. V (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1975), p. 49.

2. On the criterion of experience K. Sivaraman in his work *Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective* writes "The accomplished character of Śaiva Siddhānta, therefore, follows from the acceptance of the criterion of experience.... The reliable testimony embodying this experience is Siddhānta *par excellence*". *Op. cit.*, p. 24.

3. See J. Gonda, *A History of Indian Literature* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1977), p. 175. For a recent study on the spread of Śaiva Siddhānta in South-East Asian countries like Cambodia, Champa, Burma, Siam, Laos, Java, Bali, Sumatra and Borneo, see P. Thirugnanasambandhan, "Śaivism in South-East Asia" in *Śaiva Siddhānta Perumangam Muttuvila Malar* (Madras: Śaiva Siddhānta Perumangam, 1986), pp. 41-43. For Śaiva Siddhānta in the Western countries see K. Gnanasoorian, "Hinduism in Europe and North America, with special reference to Śaiva Siddhānta in the West today", *op. cit.*, pp. 25-29.

4. A brief account of *Āgama* as the scriptural foundation of the Śaiva Siddhānta will be given in the following pages.

5. The Fourteen *Śāstras* listed in the chronological order are: *Tiruvuntiyār*, *The Tirukkalīruppatiyār*, *The Śivāñānapōtam*, *The Śivāñāna Cittiyar*, *The Irupāvirupatu*, *The Unmaivilakkam*, *The Sivapirakacām*, *The Tiruvaruṭpayan*, *The Caṅkaṇṇa Nirākaraṇam*, *The Porrippakroṭai*, *The Neṅcuvitūtūtu*, *The Viṇaveṇṇpā*, *The Koṭikkavi*, *The Uṇmaineri Viṭakkam*. The date of composition of those works fall between the 12th to 14th century A.D. For a clear account of the contents see M. Dhavamony, *op. cit.*, p.175.

6. For a detailed discussion of this point, the following work (currently out of print) may be consulted. K. Subramania Pillai, *Śaiva Siddhānta Unmai Varalāru* (1931). For a brief account of people involved in this debate see K. Sivaraman, "Traditions in Contact and Change", *op. cit.*, Note no 9.

7. Helene Brunner, Ed. and Intro., *Sōmaśambhu Paddhati*, Vol. 1, (Pondicherry: Institut Français d' Indologie, 1963), p. XLII and "Le Sadhaka, Personnage Oublié du Śivaïsme du Sud", *Journal Asiatique*, CCLXIII (1975), p. 412.

8. It is very clear from Aghora Siva's remark "the Siddhāntagama is offered as an antidote to those who are obsessed with Advaita" (*Ratna-Traya*, 211).

9. *Supra*, Chapter III, p. 53.

10. See K. Sivaraman, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

11. As quoted in S.S. Suryanarayana Sastri, *The Śivādvaita of Srikantha* (Madras: University of Madras, 1972), p. 3.

12. *Śivajñāna Siddhiyār*, VIII.II.14-15 as translated by J.M. Nallaswami Pillai, (Madras: Maykandan Press, 1913), pp. 229-230.

13. As found in J.M. Nallaswami Pillai, *Śivagñāna Bōtham of Meikāṇṭha Deva* (Madras: The South Indian Śaiva Siddhānta Works Publishing Society, 1984), p. xix.

14. As quoted in K. M. Balasubramaniam, *Special Lectures on Śaiva Siddhānta* (Annamalai: The Annamalai University, 1959), p. 4. Also ref. S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri, *op. cit.*, p. 5.



15. See K. Sivaraman, "The Role of the Śaivāgama in the Emergence of Śaiva Siddhānta: A Philosophical Interpretation", p. 677, footnote 20. Also see the same author's article "Śaiva Siddhānta and Religious Pluralism" in Harold G. Coward (ed.), *Modern Indian Response to Religious Pluralism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), p. 168, footnote 18.

16. K. Sivaraman, "The Role of the Śaivāgamas in the Emergence of Śaiva Siddhānta", *op.cit.*, p. 677, footnote 20.

17. The term "*trika*" is used to mean the entire Śaiva thought of Kashmir. It is known as the *Trika* system as this philosophical system is based on the triad of *Āgamas*—the *Siddha Āgama*, the *Nāmaka Āgama* and the *Mālini Āgama* (*Tantralōka* 1, 35; 1, 49). Another reason for the name *trika* is that this system admits the triad, the *parā* (the higher), the *aparā* (the lower) and the *parāparā* (combination of both the higher and the lower).

18. *Tantraloka*, Vol. I, 37-48 as referred to in K. Sivaraman, *Śaivism in Philosophical Perspective*, *op.cit.*, p. 435, footnote 22.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

20. The Śaiva Siddhānta understood as the doctrine of the *Āgamas* can be confusing. "Although the *Āgamas* apply the term Śaiva Siddhānta or Siddhānta-Tantra to the doctrine which they expound, one had better avoid it in this connection, because it has become naturalized as the name of the philosophical system developed in Tamil works since the 12th century." J. Gonda, *op.cit.*, p. 155.

21. See K. Sivaraman, "The Role of the Śaivāgama in the Emergence of Śaiva Siddhānta: A Philosophical Interpretation", p. 60.

22. The Twenty-eight *Āgamas* are *Kāmika*, *Yogaja*, *Cintya*, *Kāraṇa*, *Ajita*, *Dipta*, *Sūkṣma*, *Sahasra*, *Aṃsumān*, *Suprabhedā*, *Vijaya*, *Niḥśvāsa*, *Svāyambhuva*, *Anala*, *Vīra*, *Raurava*, *Makuṭa*, *Vimala*, *Chandrahāsa*, *Mukhabimba*, *Prodgita*, *Lalita*, *Siddha*, *Santāna*, *Sarvokta*, *Pārameśvara*, *Kiraṇa*, and *Vātula*. See N. R. Bhatt, ed. *Rauravāgama*, Vol. I (Pondicherry: Institut Français D'Indologie, 1961), p. xviii. These Twenty-Eight *Āgamas* are called *mūlāgamas* (original *Āgamas*). *Kāmikāgama* is said to be the first of the series and therefore when the Twenty-eight *Āgamas* are referred to it is expressed as "the *kāmika* and the other *Āgamas*". See S. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 124 and J. Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 182. These *Āgamas* are said to have emerged from the five mouths of Śiva, namely, *Sadyojāta*, *Vāmadeva*, *Aghōra*, *Tatpuruṣa*, and *Īśāna*. The *Kāmikāgama*, *Tantrāvātāra Paṭalam* verse 4 refers to the coming of the *Āgamas* from the mouth of Śiva. To each of these principal *Āgamas* is attached a number of secondary *Āgamas* called *Upāgamas*. N. R. Bhatt, *op. cit.*, Vol. I. gives a list of 207 such *Upāgamas*. Most of the *Āgamas* are not published and of those published most are either incomplete or partial. They are either in the *grantha* script or in the *nāgari* script. For example, all sections of *Suprabhedāgama* and *Kiraṇa* are published in *grantha* script.; only the *kriyā pāda* section of *Kānila*, *Kāraṇa*, and *Makuṭa* are published and they are in *grantha* script; *kriyā pāda* section and a few chapters of *vidyā pāda* (knowledge section) of *Ajita* and *Raurava* are published in *nāgari* script and *vidyā pāda* section of *Mataṅga* is published in *nāgari* script.

23. Dasgupta, *op.cit.*, Vol. V, p. 15.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 40.



25. The above are cited in M. Arunachalam, *The Śaivāgamas* (Mayuram: Gandhi Vidyalayam, 1983), p. 12.

26. Hélène Brunner seems to minimize the significance of the theoretical section in the *Āgamas*. "Cette situation—l'absence presque générale de section théorique et l'aisance avec laquelle on peut supporter ce manque—traduit bien le caractère de la vie religieuse enseignée par les *āgama*: c'est un ritualisme franc"—"This situation—the almost general absence of the theoretical section and the ease with which one can support this omission—transmits the character of the religious life taught by the *Āgamas* well: it is a pure ritualism. "Le mysticisme dans les *āgama śivaïtes*", *Studia Missionalia*, 26 (1977), 291. This apparent dismissal of the cosmological and ontological views of the *Āgamas* is a contradiction because in the same article p. 313 she explains the inter-relation between the practical and the theoretical sections of the *Āgamas*. *Infra*. p. 192. (I gratefully acknowledge Mr. Gus Hubbard's assistance with the French here and elsewhere in this study.)

27. As translated by M. Narayanaswami Aiyar, "The Margendra Āgama", *Siddhanta Deepika*, IV (October, 1900), p. 99.

28. Hélène Brunner, "Le mysticisme dans les *āgama śivaïtes*", *op. cit.*, p. 313. Although Helene Brunner finds here a relation between the theoretical and the practical sections of the *Āgamas* (and sees the *jñānapāda* as the 'most important' section), in the beginning of the same article (p. 291) she denies the importance of the theoretical section in the *Āgamas*.

29. As found in J. N. Farquhar, *An Outline of the Religious Literature of India* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1967), p. 194.

30. J. Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

32. S. Dasgupta, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

33. *Mrgendragāma, jñānapāda*, 6.7 as translated by N. Narayanaswami Aiyar, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

34. Narayanaswami Aiyar, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

35. *Rauravāgama, jñānapāda*, 1. 8. 3 as found in J. Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

36. J. Gonda, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

37. See *Tolkappiyam*, the oldest extant Tamil grammatical work (ca. third century B.C.), *poruḷatikāram, Marappiyal*, p. 66.

38. See K. Sivaraman, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

40. Tirukkural speaks of *aruḷ* as the child begotten of love: *aruḷ eṇṇum aṇṇin kuḷavi* (*Tirukkural*, 76. 7).

41. *Śivappirakācam*: 14 as translated by Rev. Henry Hoisington, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, IV. (February-July 1853-54), p. 143.

42. The other three states of human consciousness are *jāgrat* (waking) *svapna* (dream), and *śuṣupti* (sleep). The original text is *Māṇḍūkya Up.* VII. It is also found in the *Maitrif Up.* VII 19.

43. See Umāpati's *Tiruvaruṭpayan*, 3.2ff.

44. *SS*, II. 12 as translated by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

45. Commentators differ as to which is which. For Umāpati Śivācārya *āṇava* is like the sprout; *māyā* is like bran and *karma* is like chaff (*Śivappirakāśam*, 25). For Śivagra Yogi *āṇava* is like bran; *māyā* is like chaff and *karma*

is like the sprout. The comparison used here is that of Sivanana Yogi for whom *āṇava* is like chaff; *māyā* is like bran and *karma* is like the sprout.

46. Also see *Śivappirakāśam*, *op.cit.*, p. 19.

47. There are three bodies which the soul inhabits. The *sthūla* body which is visible to our eyes. The *sūkṣma* body, made up of the five *prāṇas* (vital breaths), *manas*, *jñānendriyas* and *karmendriyas*, is the body which the soul inhabits during the state of dream and during the transition of the soul from one body to another. The *kāraṇa* body is the subtlest and innermost body that the soul inhabits.

48. Cf. *Sivajñānabōdham*, VIII.3; *Sivajñāna Siddhiyār*, VIII.37 and *Svet. Up.* II:14 and 15.

49. See *SB*, II.1; *SS*, II.1.

50. *SB*, XII. 4a as translated by Gordon Matthews in *Śiva-ñāna-Bodham: A Manual of Śaiva Religious Doctrine* (Oxford: University Press, 1948), p. 28.

51. *Śivappirakāśam* No. 7. Original text and numbering of the hymn as found in *Meykaṇṭa Śattiram* (Dharmapuram: Dharmapuram Publications, 1956), p.246. This translation is as found in K. M. Balasubramaniam, *Special Lectures on Śaiva Siddhānta* (Madras: Annamalai University, 1959), p. 34.

52. *SP*, II.1 as trans. by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

53. K. Sivaraman, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

54. *SS*, VI.8 as translated by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 217.

55. *Irupavirupatu* (*Irupa Irupatu*) (XX.9-10). It indicates a type of poetic composition where the *venpa* metre and *akaval* metre alternate in the twenty verses. This work praises Meykaṇṭa for his exposition of the Śaiva Siddhānta truths.

56. See *SS* as translated by J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

57. See K. Sivaraman, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 496 (note 30).

59. The *Vedāṅgas* (six limbs of the *Vedas*) are *sikṣā* (science of grammatical elements), *kalpa* (body of rules and rituals), *vyākaraṇa* (grammar), *nirukta* (etymological explanation), *chandas* (magical hymns), and *jyotiṣa* (astronomical science).

60. See Shanmugham Pillai, "Hymns of Tayumanavar", *Siddhanta Deepika*, IV, No. 7 (December 1900), p. 155.

61. For a clear explanation of the term *mudrā* as it occurs in Sanskrit religious literature, and particularly as cited in Nirmalamani's Commentary *Prabhā* on Aghoraśivācārya Paddhati, see *Mudrālakṣaṇam*, written and edited by S. S. Janaki (Mayiladuturai: International Institute of Śaiva Siddhānta Research, 1986).

62. The whole verse is translated above, Chapter IV, p. 162.

63. See *supra.*, Chapter 1, p. 6.

64. These are by no means the only references to the Siddhānta system. In these places he specifically uses the term 'Siddhānta' while in many other places he refers to his faith by way of recalling the preceptors of the faith, mentioning the tenets of the school of thought, or cherishing the places significant for his religion.

65. Winslow, *Tamil English Dictionary*.

66. This indeed is the nature of Vedānta Siddhānta *Samarasam*.

67. This has already been referred to in the preceding pages.

68. See Puvai Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, *Meykaṇṭavṛttiurai*, *op.cit.*, p. 620.

69. R. S. Subramaniam Pillai, *op.cit.*, p. 10.



## CHAPTER VI

# VEDĀNTA SIDDHĀNTA SAMARASAM

The study of Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam* (oneness of the quintessence of Vedānta and Siddhānta) here poses three main questions. First, what is Vedānta? Second, what is Siddhānta? Third, what is *samarasam*? The first two questions have already been dealt with in the previous two chapters. Vedānta, for Tāyumānavar, is the singular relation of the soul (self) to God. This relation is Advaita. This unitive experience (*advaitānubhava*) is the highest and essential teaching of the *Upaniṣads* as expounded in the *mahāvākyas* (great proclamations of the truth of oneness), such as *prajñānam brahma* (Intelligence is Brahman) (*Ait. Up.* III.3); *aham brahmāsmi* (I am Brahman) (*Brh. Up.* I:4.10) and *tat tvam asi* (That Thou art) (*Ch. Up.* VI.8.7 and VI.16.3). Siddhānta, according to him, is the experiencing of the eternal and inseparable union with Śiva (*Śivabhōgam*) which is a state of endless bliss. This experiencing is realized by way of ascending through various stages of (*sōpanam*) spiritual life and transcending all thoughts. While Vedānta gives philosophical depth to the thought of Tāyumānavar, Siddhānta grants mystical and theological fervor to his ideas as Siddhāntic experience is understood to transcend all other thought, system and tradition.

### 1. Diverse Views of Samarasam

The idea of *samarasam*, which is the central focus of this study, will be discussed in detail in the following pages. The *Tamil Lexicon* splits the word *samarasa* into “*sama*” and “*rasa*” giving the meaning: equality, harmony and identity (*oṟṟumai*). A second understanding of the word, according to the *Lexicon*, is impartiality (*naṭunilaimai*). The *Tamil-English Dictionary*<sup>1</sup> explains the word as reconciliation (*camātānam*) and equality. The *Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary*<sup>2</sup> gives a variety of meanings to the word *samarasam*. Splitting the word into *samam* and *rasam*, and taking the word in the context of *camātānam*, Winslow gives the meaning as peace and tranquillity. A second meaning derived in the context of reconciliation is agree-

ment—the act of reconciling opinions and views. A third meaning is equality (*oppu*); and finally the word is understood as fellowship and familiarity. The *Sanskrit Dictionary*<sup>3</sup> gives the word *samarasa* the meaning of “having equal feelings.” The two other Sanskrit words which convey a similar meaning, as mentioned above, are *samadarśana* (impartial looking on things) and *samadṛṣṭi* (the act of looking on things without any acrimony or prejudice).

The word ‘*samarasa*’ occurs in the popular Śaivite work *Laṭitā-sahasranāma*:<sup>4</sup> “*satyajñānānandarūpā sāmasyaparāyaṇā*”: The form of Truth, Wisdom and Bliss, (in) the last resort (is) of co-equal (Śiva and Śakti) nature (202). The verse and the commentary use ‘*samarasa*’ to convey the idea of unity and oneness like that found between Śiva and Śakti. The word used in the text is “*sāmasya*”: the nature of *samarasa*. Commenting on the verse, the commentator Bhaskarārāya writes:<sup>5</sup>

paraspara-tapaḥ sampat-phalāyita-parasparam  
prapañca-mātāpitarau prāncau jāyāpatī  
stumhaḥ iti //  
'bhōktṛbhōgya-karanōrmiṣamkṣaye  
sāmasyarasadohinī śive'  
ityādi-Kālidāsoktica

Samapradhānau samasattvau samo tayloro' iti śrutiśca

The learned men say ‘we praise the ancient pair, the parents of the Universe. Each is the end attained by the penance of the other’ Kalidāsa says ‘Śiva (Devī) milks out the essence of the co-equal nature when the waves of the enjoyer, enjoyment and the means are calm’. The *śruti* says ‘equally pre-eminent, equally fundamental, both are equal’.

In the light of the text and commentary mentioned above, we can say that *samarasam* in this context refers to the equality of Śiva and Śakti, a basic theological tenet of Śaiva Siddhānta.

J.M. Nallaswami Pillai<sup>6</sup> uses the word *samarasam* in order to bring out the ideas behind the two related words *samadṛṣṭi* and *samadarśanam*. He takes *samarasam* to mean looking at events impartially and seeing two things equally (*iruvinaṭoppu*), which is implied by the Siddhāntic doctrine of the equality of two *karmas*. He takes *samadarśanam* and *samadṛṣṭi* to refer to an understand-

ing which retains the distinctness of each system while being open to other traditions without any acrimony and partiality.

According to Muttiah Pillai,<sup>7</sup> another Śaiva Siddhānta scholar of this century, *samarasam* is a matter of discerning the complementary character of various teachings and accepting different religious disciplines as complementary to one another. He says that *samarasam* is *vetāntamum cittāntamum orṟumaiyāna cuvai yutaiyana*: both Vedānta and Siddhānta yield a taste which is identical. *Orṟumaiyāna cuvai* consists of the right placing of the relations of the three Siddhānta entities: *pati*, *paśu* and *pāśa*.

In the book *Śaivattin Samarasam*, Tiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar expresses the opinion that *samarasam* is a matter of going beyond all discrimination on the basis of *jāti* (caste), religion, creed, nationality and language. The well-known scholar says that the main characteristic of a true religion is *samarasam* in the sense that a true religion always promotes unity.<sup>8</sup> The same writer in another work called *Kaṭavulḱ kātcciyum Tāyumānavarum*, says that *samarasam* is seeing God (*kaṭavulḱkātcci*),<sup>9</sup> a state which is possible through God's grace. In this sense, *samarasam* is the end of religion. All existing differences are viewed as very important for growth, (p. 28) and plurality is for the sake of unity.

The author of *Samarasa Jñāniyār*, commenting on Tāyumānavar, perceives *samarasam* as Tāyumānavar's *bhaktānubhava* (devotee's experience) and *śivānubhūti* (Śiva-experience).<sup>10</sup> Here, the author takes *samarasam* as an experience which makes one realize his union with God.

Kasivasi Sivananda Yatindra Swamy in his book *Nannilai Tirppu* views *samarasam* as a religion of co-operation and collaboration. This religion is not bound by the clutches of tribe, *gotra*, caste etc. The author propounds this kind of *samarasam* in order to overcome those binding clutches.<sup>11</sup>

*Samarasam* is understood as a harmonizing of all men by directing them to a common truth to which all can subscribe.<sup>12</sup> Isaac Tambyah briefly deals with *samarasam* in his book *Psalms of a Śaiva Saint*. After stating that *samarasam* is bringing into union the Siddhāntic and Vedāntic postulate that "God and the soul are neither one nor two", he describes what *samarasam* is not. According to Tambyah, *samarasam* is not a colourless eclec-



ticism; it is not the pacific thought that all religions are the same; neither is it an attempt at harmonizing all creeds.<sup>13</sup>

The above scholars project their own view of *samarasam* into Tāyumānavar's understanding of it. Those interpreting *samarasam* as found in the religious poetry of Tāyumānavar often tend to overlook the uniqueness of the poet's view of *samarasam*, which is discussed below.

## 2. Tāyumānavar's view of Samarasam

Having considered different renderings of the word *samarasam* I am inclined to say that it is Tāyumānavar who used the word Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam* in a unique way. He is the originator of the mystical and theological understanding of *samarasam*. In order to understand the depth of his view hidden in the concept of Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam*, we shall now look at his hymns.

Tāyumānavar has used the word *samarasam* sixteen times in his hymns. Out of the sixteen occurrences, ten are found in the section called *Cittarkaṇam*<sup>14</sup> (The Assembly of *Siddhars*) (VII. 1-10) . . . *vētānta cittānta camaracanaṇṇilaiperra/vittakac cittarkaṇamē*—"Oh the assembly of *Siddhars* who have realized the tranquil state of *samarasam* of Vedānta and Siddhānta." In this section the poet-saint extols the *Siddhars* as the lions of asceticism (*tavarācacinkam*) (VII.9), the people who always remain in the state of contemplating Śiva (*civayōka nilai niṛpavar*) (VII.3); and the people who have attained eight *Siddhis*.<sup>15</sup> His admiration for *Siddhars* is on account of their God-realization and mystical union with God, and their living by the grace of the Supreme Śiva (VII.3) and their being masters of perfection (VII.4).

One who is aware of the unorthodox lives of those *Siddhars* will question Tāyumānavar's approval, and his appreciation and exaltation of those who were considered 'radicals' in their time. They were 'radicals' and 'rebels', because they were iconoclasts and non-conformists. They rejected creeds and rituals which they described as 'pretensions and crutches', and they did not subscribe to any religious institution. How could Tāyumānavar praise such a group? He accepted and acknowledged them for their mystic experience and godly life (VII.1-10). Their experience of God enabled them to 'see' the essence of Vedānta and Siddhānta. Another possible reason for Tāyumānavar recognizing with

approval the Siddhars may be their acknowledgement by Tirumular and the *Tēvāram* Saints themselves. According to Tirumular, they are the saints who have eradicated *malas*, who live in the final state of deliverance and who have become Sivam (*Tirumantiram*, 497). Although one may not be sure that this description directly refers to the Siddhars, there is another verse which is a clear reference to the Siddhars: "Those who live in *yoga* and see the divine light (*oli*) and power (*cakti*) through *yoga* are the Cittars" (*Tirumantiram*, 1490).<sup>18</sup> In Sundarar's *Tēvāram* (VII.52.10) reference is made to the group of devotees as well as to the group of Siddhars (*pattar cittar palar...*) who always adore God (Śiva). There is another reference to the Siddhars in the same verse: *...cittar cittam vaittapukalc ciruyan...*: "The servant who cherishes the Siddhars in the heart." The servant here is Sundarar and he recognizes the greatness of the Siddhars. The Siddhars, thus have the distinction of being recognized and cherished by great people, like Tirumular and the *Tēvāram* hymnists like Sundarar. It is natural, then, that Tāyumānavar, himself a mystic, recognized the eminence of the Siddhars. In Chapter Four of this research it has been stated that the *Advaita* relation, envisioned as oneness in deepest love has become a social force which could not tolerate any sense of superiority based on language, caste or creed. The Siddhars realizing this unitive experience (*advaitānubhava*) which is the essence of Vedānta and Siddhānta teachings, opposed the brāhmaṇical domination and the exaggerated and excessive emphasis on religious rituals at the cost of the spirit of the rituals; in short, they rejected the brāhmin-led caste system. Here one may remember Tirumular's flings at brāhmin priesthood, especially at its hollowness when not accompanied by devotion. The example of the Siddhars, their God-experience and the fact that they lived up to that *anubhava* and transcended the limiting conditions of caste etc., were a stimulus for Tāyumānavar's own growth into the experience of Śiva (*śivānubhava*). Therefore, he openly hailed the greatness of those Siddhars whose spiritual life was a source of inspiration for his own broader vision of religion.

In the hymn II.5, which has already been discussed in Chapter Five, Tāyumānavar asks for Divine Help through grace (*pātukāt taruļceyka*, II.5) in order to penetrate into the mystery of knowledge (*jñāna*), and to be one with the ever-filling and perfect



Bliss (*paripūraṇa ānantam*, (II.5). Once this penetration into the secret depth of Wisdom is made and the intuitive knowledge is attained, the perception of the soul of its relation to the Self is:

cantatamum eṇatuṇceyal niṇatuṇceyal yāṇ eṇṇun—  
taṇmai niṇṇai yaṇṇiyillāt  
taṇmaiyaḷ vēralēṇ vētānta cittānta  
camaraca cupāvamituvē

My action is always Thy action. The nature of myself does not exist apart from Thee. Therefore I am not different from you. This indeed is the nature of the quintessence of Vedānta and Siddhānta. (II.5)

This beautiful verse fittingly spells out the true meaning of *samarasam* as understood by Tāyumanavar. The realization that “I am not different from Thou” (*tanmaiyaḷ veralēṇ*) is *Samara-sam*. It leads one back to the Upanisadic *mahāvākyas* like *aham brahmāsmi* (*Brh. Up.* I.4.10) which proclaim the unity of the soul with the Ultimate. This is the *Advaita* idea of the relation of the soul with the Absolute—*parama śivam*. The oneness described by Tāyumanavar, however, is not complete absorption. The nature of this relation is expressed in the following hymn:

onṇiraṇṇṭum illatuvāy onṇiraṇṇṭum uḷlatuvāy  
niṇṇa camattunilai nērperuvatenṇālō

When shall I attain straight that equalling state of union without the distinction of one and two and that equalling state of union with the difference of one and two?

(XLV:14.15)

There are many other hymns which show his craving for the unitive experience, which implicitly refer to the nature of *samarasam* (*camaraca cupāvam*). In the above hymn, he uses the term *camattunilai* to convey the state of *samarasam*. In the experience of the Ultimate Union “I reach that equal state where one and two are not.”<sup>17</sup> The idea of *camattunilai*, here, is a spiritual state which looks at the diversities of the world of becoming real without losing sight of the essential and ultimate unity of Being. While he directs attention to the Vedānta (*Advaita*) understanding of *mukti* as the state of oneness (*onṇiraṇṇṭum illatuvāy nilai*)



(also cf. XXVIII.63: *nāṇavaṇāy nirpatu*), he also highlights the Siddhānta position on the understanding of *mukti* as *onṇiraṇṇum ullatuvāy ninṇa nilai*—a state of union where the difference is maintained while holding on to the unique state of oneness. This view of Tāyumānavar is consistent with that of the SS:

ulakelamāki, verāy, utanumāy oḷiyāy ōṅki  
alakilā vuyirkaḷ, kaṇmattu, āṇaiyin amarntu cellat,  
talaivanāy, iṇaṇṇin taṇmai taṇakkeytalṇṇit tānē  
nilavuci ramalanāki, ninṇaṇan, ninkā teṅkum

The Transcendent Light is One with the world, yet is different, and is one and different. The Supreme guides innumerable souls and each one's action by way of His will. The Perfect One pervades all, yet unaffected by the imperfections of Its creatures, and stands as Pure Self-luminous and secondless. (SS, II.I)

Even more categorically, Aruḷnanti Śivācārya says in his other work *Irupāvirupatu*: *onṇākāmal iraṇṇākāmal onrumiraṇṇum inṇākāmal*—Without being one, without being two, without being neither. (XX.9-10)

The views of both Vedānta and Siddhānta are drawn into the meeting point of *samarasam* where one sees everything as *Śivam* and experiences the presence of Śiva everywhere (*eṇkum ciyamē*, cf. XXVIII.65-66). The following hymn too implies the idea of *samarasam*:

pācamakalāmal patiyil kalavāmal  
māciḷ camattumutti vāykkunāḷ ennāḷō

When will the day for that freedom (*mutti*) of pure equality come without complete separation of *āṇava malam* and without completely merging in the Lord. (XLV.14.16)

*Camattumutti*, here, is nothing but the unitive state of the soul with the Lord (*pati*). As a Śaiva Siddhānta saint, as referred to in the above hymns, while he speaks of the merger of the soul with the Lord he does not take it as complete absorption of the soul in the *pati* (Lord). The state again is *onṇāy verāy*... Another important point here is that the poet-saint does not hope for that day of complete separation and annihilation of the *āṇava*

*mala* (*pāśam*). He does so, because as a Śaiva Siddhāntin it is his conviction that although *āṇavamala* has to be controlled, it cannot be uprooted because it serves to give access to *pati*. Holding on to Siddhānta teachings about God and the soul, Tāyumānavar attempts to bring together both Siddhānta and Vedānta under one encompassing spirit of *samarasam* which is nothing but “*Śivānūpūti*”. (V.4)

In II.5 Tāyumānavar communicates the nature of *samarasam* as an inseparable union where the soul experiences and affirms that it is not different (*veṇḍālēn*) from Thee, and whatever the soul does is His act (*eṇatuṇceyal niṇatuṇceyal*). This union or ‘feeling of oneness’ for Tāyumānavar is made possible through and only through benevolent grace, which is fundamental to Śaiva Siddhānta teaching. This is referred to in the following:<sup>18</sup>

vārātelāmoḷiya varuvaṇaelām eyta  
maṇatu cāṭciyatākavē  
maruva nilaitantatum vetānta cittānta  
marapu camaracamākavē  
pūrāyamāyunaṇa ūkamatu tantatum  
poy uḷalai nilai aṇṇaṇap  
pōtaneritantatum cācuvata āṇanta  
pōkamē viṇṇavē  
nīrāḷamāyuruka uḷḷaṇpu tantatum  
niṇṇataruḷ iṇṇum iṇṇum  
niṇṇaiyēṭuṇai eṇṇa eṇṇai yēkākka oru  
niṇaivu caṇṇuṇṭākilō  
pārāti aṇiyātamōnamē iṭaiviṭāp  
pārākaniṇka aruḷvāy  
pārkkumiṭam eṇkum oru nīkkamaṇa niṇaikinṇa  
paripūraṇāṇantamē

It was Thy grace that granted me the state where the mind as witness (in detachment) could give up the things that are unattained and accepted the things that are attained. It was Thy grace that granted me to discern without doubt the nature of Vedānta and Siddhānta as *samarasa*. It was Thy grace that enabled me to realize that this deceitful nature of the body is transient and to realize that release is the enjoyment of the eternal Bliss. It is your grace that bestows love for Thee which melts and flows unceasingly like water. Furthermore, the

thought of protecting me occurs in Thee who art my only refuge. Grant me Thy grace so that I shall ever remain attached to the *mōna* (stillness) which cannot be known by any *tattvas* (categories) like earth. Oh ever-filling Bliss that is omnipresent and seen everywhere one looks. (II.8)

The whole tone of this hymn is one of a search for God's grace. It is his firm faith that one cannot attain that *camaracanilai*, the experience of the harmony of Vedānta and Siddhānta (which he implies later in the same verse as the realization of complete silence (*mōnam*),) without God's grace. With God's grace the soul can ever remain attached to the stillness which is the culmination of all thoughts and represents the attainment of transcendence. The poet-saint's prayer here is for that grace by which he could hold on to the *mōna* that cannot be known by any *tattvas* but only by His grace (*aru!*).

Tāyumānavar characterizes *samarasam* as *mōna samarasam* (stillness in the realization of the essence) in the hymn IV.4 which has been translated above in Chapter Five. This *mōna samarasam* raises a challenge for all structured religions. For the latter the task will be to acknowledge the 'beyondness' outside the reach of particular faiths (*camayam kaṭanta mōna camaracam*). The challenge also consists in accepting the goal. *Mōna samarasam* is the end of all religions and Tāyumānavar's point is that in such a challenge lies the convergence of all religions irrespective of their diversity as expressions of faith.

The *samarasa* state explained above in IV.4 is also seen as a serene and peaceful state of the soul. Shanmugham Pillai<sup>19</sup> translating the *mōna* and *samarasam* of this verse comments that the serene state of the soul is to be found in the blissful state of *mōna* (silence), where reigns supreme the conciliatory peacefulness (*samarasam*). *Samarasam* is that serene state of mind which neither word nor language can explain. This pure transcendental consciousness is as much objectless as it is wordless. The Reality which is beyond words and beyond language can only be expressed by silence. This idea, which as we had earlier explained, is also the central idea of the *Upaniṣads* (cf. *Tait. Up.* VI.22; *Mund. Up.* III.1.8; and *Ait. Up.* I.3.3).

It was shown in the previous chapter that Tāyumānavar was a true Śaivite by faith, but in terms of religious experience he



goes beyond the structures of a particular religion. That which is beyond all visible religions is the experience and; according to Tāyumānavar it is *mōṇa samarasam*. This *mōṇa samarasam* is a state of silence where one experiences Supreme Bliss and this experience (*anubhava*) is the point where all differences are set aside; all religions meet and merge; and in this blissful state Vedānta and Siddhānta are no longer two polarizing systems but two roads which merge in the realm of unitive experience (*samarasam*). The poet-saint accepts the revelatory aspect of each religion but still claims that they all come to the common path of 'silence' (*mōṇam*), which is the point of convergence for all religions.

In another section of his hymns Tāyumānavar views *samarasam* as realization of Śiva (*śivānubhūti*):

... vētānta cittānta  
 camaraca civāṇupūti—  
 maṇṇa oṟucol koṇṭ enaittaṭuttāṇṭa aṇṇi—  
 vālvitta ṇānakuruvē  
 mantrakuruvē yōkatantrakuruvē mūlan—  
 marapilvarum maṇṇakuruvē

Oh Thou the Preceptor of *mantras*, Oh Thou the Preceptor of *yoga* and *tantra*, Oh Thou the Preceptor of *mauna* who art descended from Mūlar, Oh Thou the Preceptor of Wisdom, Thou hast saved me by "One Word" (*oṟu col*) and made me to attain the *Samarasa* "*Śivānubhūti*" where Vedānta and Siddhānta are one.

(V.4)

Personal experience of the Supreme in one's life is beyond description, and the most appropriate way of explaining the experience is silence (*mauna*). It is an intimate union where the soul feels that it is liberated from the clutches of all binding forces (*pāśa*) and gradually drawn to the experience of Śiva (*Śivānubhūti*). By using the expression *Samarasa Śivānubhūti* the poet-saint beautifully pictures the quiescence of the soul which has experienced Self in his own self. Once the soul abides with the Supreme, it is in a state of everlasting peace and tranquillity and quiescence. This abiding and quiescence is *samarasam*.

Tāyumānavar always craved to attain that blissful state of Śiva-experience (*Śivānubhūti*). He, in admiration for both

*Samayācāryas* (the Saint Founders of Śaiva Religion) and *Santānācāryas* (the line of Teachers of the Śaiva Religion), always eulogized them for their God-experience (cf. XIV.30-31; XXVIII.26; LXV.ii.4-5, 7; LXV.iii.8). For Tāyumānavar they are the *gurus* who realized the Supreme in their lives (*avanē tām ānavar*). Those masters have witnessed that He alone is the *guru*, and our poet-saint's desire for the same realization is shown in the following verse:

avanē paramum avanē kuruvum  
avanē akilamaṇaittum avanē tām  
ānavarē conṇāl avarēkuruveṇakku  
nāṇavanāynīrpat entanāl

He indeed is the Supreme. He in fact is the *Guru*. He truly is all pervasive. Those who have become Him (Those who were united with Him) say (witness) that "He indeed is my *Guru*". When will be that day when I become Him. (XXVIII.63)

This idea of "I becoming Him" (*nān avanāy nīrpatu*) is frequently found in the hymns. Attaining that unspeakable state of the soul's unitive experience, seen as *samarasam*, is possible only through grace (*aruḷ*). This, however, does not mean that the individual soul is very passive. "Making me Him" (*eṇṇaittāṇākal* XLIV.8) is a process. It is a process, in the sense that the individual soul has to cast out all that binds (*pāśam*) him, obstructing his way to liberation. This condition is stated in the final sections of the poet-saint's hymns:

uḷḷatum illatumāki muṇṇ—  
uṇarvātuvay uṇṇuḷaṅkaṇṭatellām  
taḷḷeṇaccolli ennaiyaṇ—eṇṇait  
tānākkikkoṇṭa camarttaip pārtōḷi

Oh companion, see how He (knowingly) made me Himself by asking me to reject whatever your mind realized by its own process of knowing as being and non-being. (LIV.8)

in this process of casting away the bondage (*pāśam*) all traditional means are recommended (cf. XII.1), while placing *nāna nerī* (the path of discriminative knowledge) as the main path (*mukhya nerī*) (cf. IV.11; LXV.15.2).

The realization process involves the fulfilment of certain requirements. God's grace (*aruḷ*), as pointed out above, occupies the first place. Halting one's thought in terms of 'I' and 'mine' (halting mental activity) is another most important condition for God-realization. The following hymn shows the process of God-realization in a nutshell:

anparuk kaṇpānameyyaṇ—aiyaṇ  
 āṇantamōṇaṇ aruṭkurunātaṇ  
 taṇpātam cenniṇiḷ vaittān—eṇṇait  
 tāṇarint eṇmaṇam tāṇ iṇantēnē

My Lord is the embodiment of love to his devotees. He is Blissful Silence and gracious Master (to His lovers). He crowned my head with His (holy) feet. Concomitantly, I realized myself and had my mind die (my mind ceased thinking). (LIV.10)

According to Śaiva Siddhānta one can attain that Supreme state of Union only through the Divine grace (*tiruaruḷ*). In the above hymn it is figuratively expressed as *taṇpataṇ cenniṇiḷ vaittān* (He placed on my head His feet). The moment He placed the feet on the head of His devotee, the soul allowed its ego-mind to go dead and realized the Self. Both 'dying' and 'Realization' happened concomitantly. This death of the mind (*maṇam tāṇ iṇantēnē*) refers to the dying of the self bound by impurities (*malas*) *āṇava*, *karma* and *māyā*. This breaking of the limiting conditions of the self ensures the soul its spiritual elevation. In this wider perspective, all the *mārgas* (paths), which prepare the individual self to get rid of the binding forces are accepted and the individual has to practise different paths according to his ability. All the different paths help the realization of one's self, which is the goal of all enquiries.

Tāyumanavar's extolling of the *Advaita* union and the state of *samarasam* is siddhāntic in nature. The following hymns illustrate this point:

...  
 oṇṇōṭiranteṇā camaraca corūpa cukam  
 uṇṇiṭa eṇmaṇatiṇ vaṇṇan  
 tiruvaruḷ muṭikka ittēkamoṭu kāṇpeṇō



tēṭariya cattāki eṇ  
cittamicai kuṭikonṭa aṇivāṇa teyvamē  
tecōmayāṇantamē

Will I see the fulfilment of the desire of my heart (for *camaraca corūpa cukam*) when I am still in this body by the act of your grace which fills my mind with the bliss of (*camaraca corūpam*) (seeing the essential form) which is neither the state of 'one' nor 'two'? O Bliss of teeming splendour, O Supreme Intelligence, Thou art my seeking Reality which is hard to find while (Thou) dost dwell in my heart. (XII.1)

In the illustration of the Blissful state as *onṛōṭiraṇṭeṇa*, Tāyumānavar clearly enunciates the Siddhānta view of 'oneness in God'. According to Siddhānta teaching the unity is neither one nor two. The Siddhānta position on the union of the individual soul with the Supreme Self as not one of identity nor complete absorption is further shown in XXII.10:

yāṇeṇal kāṇen pūraṇa nīraivil  
yātiṇum irunṭa pēroḷi nī—  
tāṇ eṇa nīṇkum camattu uṇa eṇṇait—  
taṇṇavan ākkavum takum kāṇ  
vāṇeṇa vayanṅki onṛu iraṇṭeṇṇā  
mārkamām neṇitantu mārā—  
tēṇ ena rucittu aṇparaik kalanta  
celvamē ciṇparacivamē

You are the great light which is all pervasive. In the equilibrium state of mind I do not see me as myself. To make me worthy of this state You made me yours. Having shown the path of 'seeing' which is neither one nor two, and giving me the blissful pleasure (like that) of honey that does not lose its taste of sweetness, You unite with your devotees, Oh precious Divine Siva. (XXII.10)

The union of matured souls with the Lord is neither a state of 'one-ness' nor 'two-ness'. In both the above-mentioned hymns Tāyumānavar brings Vedānta and Siddhānta together and characterizes *samarasam* as the Advaitic experience of Śiva (*advaitam āna aikiyānupavamē*, LXIII.293). Being a Śaiva Siddhāntin he further describes this unitive experience as *onṛō-*

*ṭiraṇṭeṇa camaraca corūpacukam*—the nature of the union is neither one nor two.

The poet-saint does not restrict his insight (*darśana*) to the theoretical level alone. He wants to see the practical application of that supreme realization. Therefore, he asks for the divine grace to illumine him for finding the operational aspect of that transformative experience of Śiva. His prayer in the following hymn is to have that kind of experience which helps him to get involved in the practical realm of existence:

...

caṇmatastāpaṇamum vetānta-cittānta  
camaraca nirvākanilaiyum  
mātikkoṭu aṇṭaparappelām aṇiyavē  
vantaruḷum ṇānakuruvē

...

Oh the Preceptor of Wisdom, come and grant me Thy grace so that I may have the knowledge of the accomplishment of furthering the founding of the Six religions and also the state of upholding the oneness of Vedānta and Siddhānta. (V.3)

Tāyumānavar here pleads for the Lord's grace for comprehending the essential nature of Vedānta and Siddhānta, which is *samarasam*.

The use of "*vētānta cittānta camaraca nirvākanilai*" needs special attention here. For Tāyumānavar the idea of *samarasam* is not a theoretical one devoid of any practical application. Here we find the characteristic feature of our poet-saint. He does not want philosophy and religion to be very dry, restricted to the realm of abstraction. In other words, the abstract Vedānta philosophy of the Impersonal One is here brought to the level of practical religion. Here we may recall Chapter IV of this research where *advaitānubhava* was presented also as providing a basis for concern for the integral growth of every one irrespective of one's caste, creed and religion. This is promotion of fellowship and it is one of the operational dimensions (*nirvākanilai*) of *samarasam* as understood by Tāyumānavar. It is in this context, that he asks for Divine help in understanding the practical state of the "*vētānta cittānta camaracam*". The operational dimension of *samarasam* is found also in the meeting of all faiths around the all-

embracing harmonious spirit of God realization. The poet-saint praised, glorified and incessantly longed for that inseparable union, and invited everyone to participate in that bliss-giving experience of oneness: "O people of the world come together to see the Divine Hall that bestows liberation." (TP., XXX, 1-3)

## NOTES

1. R. V. Viswanatha Pillai, *Tamil-English Dictionary*.
2. M. Winslow, *Comprehensive Tamil and English Dictionary*.
3. Apte, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.
4. The work containing 320 *ślōkas*, in three chapters, occurs in the second part of the *Brahmaṇḍa Purāṇa*, which is listed as the last of Sri Veda Vyasa's Eighteen *Purāṇas*. One of the Vira-Śaiva Sanskrit works called *Siddha-Siddhānta-Paddhati* uses the word *sāmarasya* to mean Śiva and Śakti. The oneness between Śiva and Śakti is expressed by *sāmarasya*.
5. R. Ananthakrishna Sastry, trans., *Lalitāsahasranāma with Bhāskara's Commentary* (Madras: Adyar Vasanta Press, 1925), p. 291.
6. J. M. Nallaswami Pillai, "Samarasam", *Siddhantam*, I (1928), pp. 269-75.
7. Muttiah Pillai, "Samarasam", *Siddhantam*, I (May-June, 1912), pp. 147-57.
8. Tiru, V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, *Śaivattin Samarasam* (Madras: Sadhu Printing Press, 1926), p. 16.
9. Tiru V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, *Ṛaṭavul Kāṭcciyum Tāyumānavarum* (Madras: Sadhu Printing Press, 1928), p. 40.
10. P. Sri, *Samarasa Jñāniyār* (Madras, Amuda Nilayam, 1963), pp. 28-36.
11. Kasivasi Sivananda Yatindra, *Nannilai Tirpu* (Madras, 1936), p. 6.
12. Swami Vedacalam, *Śaiva Siddhānta Gñāna Bodham* (Madras, 1915), p. 15.
13. Isaac Tambyah, *Psalms of a Śaiva Saint* (London: Luzac & Co., 1925), p. xxxi.
14. The other six references will be found in TP. II:5 and 8; IV:4; V:3 and 4 and XX:1.
15. *Supra*, Chapter III, p. 61.
16. K. Zvelebil, *The Smile*, p. 225.
17. P. Arunachalam, *Studies and Translations: Philosophical and Religious* (Colombo: The Colombo Apothecaries Co. Ltd., 1937), p. 250.
18. Also see *Sivajñānabodham*, V. and *Sivajñāna Siddhiyār*, III.5.8 and III.6.8
19. Shanmugham Pillai, "Hymns of St. Tāyumānavar", *Siddhānta Deepika*, I (July, 1897), pp. 6-10.



The first of these is the fact that the United States has a large and growing population. This is due to a number of causes, including immigration from foreign countries, and a high birth rate. The second is the fact that the United States has a large and growing economy. This is due to a number of causes, including the discovery of new resources, and the development of new industries.

The third is the fact that the United States has a large and growing military. This is due to a number of causes, including the discovery of new weapons, and the development of new military strategies.

The fourth is the fact that the United States has a large and growing influence in the world. This is due to a number of causes, including the discovery of new resources, and the development of new industries.

The fifth is the fact that the United States has a large and growing culture. This is due to a number of causes, including the discovery of new resources, and the development of new industries.

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The twentieth is the fact that the United States has a large and growing cartoon. This is due to a number of causes, including the discovery of new resources, and the development of new industries.

## CONCLUSION

At the very outset of this study it was stated that the religious core of the hymns of Tāyumānavar is the notion of Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam*, the experiential intuition of an underlying essence shared by both Vedānta and siddhānta. The introductory chapters discussed the general situation, which serves as the backdrop for the life and writings of Tāyumānavar, and the formative factors which influenced his religious poetry and its message for the generations that followed him. The analysis of the poet-saint's hymns showed the depth of his understanding of the truth of Śaiva Siddhānta and the kind of relation he perceived between God, soul and the world, a relation he described as an Advaita relation. Chapter IV outlined the original vision of Vedānta as found in the *Veda* and the *Upaniṣads*, its scholastic interpretation, and the popular understanding of Vedānta as found in the Tamil religious literature. This discussion showed Tāyumānavar's familiarity with both the doctrinal as well as the popular understanding of Vedānta. As shown in the last section of that chapter, the poet-saint finally concluded that the essence of Vedānta was *advaitānubhava* (unity experience) and presented that experience as the spiritual, social and unifying force which everyone must realize. This unique interpretation of Vedānta as *advaitānubhava* provided scope for him to see how every tradition could participate in that everlasting blissful experience. At the center of the chapter we have, therefore, *anubhava* (experience). Śaiva Siddhānta tradition, which was the tradition of his immediate religious background, is understood by him as the essence of the teachings of the *Veda*, the *Āgamas*, and the Saint Founders of the tradition. In these contexts too the poet-saint demonstrates that *anubhava* (*Śivānubhava*) is the goal of Siddhānta. The meeting point, thus, for both Vedānta (non-dual and Siddhānta, which he describes as "dualism that defies scrutiny" (*ōtariyatuvitam*), is *samarasam*, which is the experience of the essence of both the *Veda* and the *Upaniṣads*, on the one hand, and the *Āgamas*, on the other.

A few significant ideas emerge from this study. The idea of *samarasam*, as we have seen, is the central point of the religious

poetry of Tāyumānavar. *Samarasam*, as we understand it from this study, is not an overlooking of the distinctness of the respective traditions; these are considered here with a clear awareness of their differences as religious traditions. Yet, he argued, in their zeal to maintain conceptual distinctness, the traditions often tend to overlook the essential teaching of the original vision which is all-inclusive and all-embracing. If they could focus on that core, they could, see that the differences in their respective conceptual formulations are only peripheral. Indeed, they point to a center which is the experience of oneness.

*Samarasam* is not a religion. Tāyumānavar does not advocate a new religion of *samarasam* as something which would have to be brought into existence by rejection of the old philosophical structures of Vedānta and Siddhānta. He is not pleading for any discarding whatsoever, but rather for the awakening of each tradition to seek what is present in its own depth. Only in this way will one truly share his experience with other traditions and participate in the experiential richness of other religions.

*Samarasam*, for Tāyumānavar, is neither a doctrine nor a mere harmonization of creeds. It is rather a call for lending attention to that which makes harmonization possible. The two traditions of Vedānta and Siddhānta can be reconciled as concordant when they are viewed in the light of their experiential core. The differences of 'non-dualism' and 'dualism' when thus viewed in the light of what lies at their root, will cease to be 'different'. They will become a mere conceptual distinction.

*Samarasam* is also a reconciliation between 'thought' and what is beyond or behind 'thought'. This point is important; for when people progress in their spiritual ascent they may tend to come to despise thought itself. The thought system itself must rather yield to the vision of what is behind it helping one to awaken to it. Tāyumānavar always approved and acclaimed Vedānta and Siddhānta as two thought systems of intellectual depth. His quest, however, as we understand from the study of the hymns, went beyond the reach of thought and entered into the realm of experience. Tāyumānavar characterizes this experiential state as *mauna samarasam*—the silent experiential state—which is witnessed only in silence. Nevertheless he does not despise the philosophical and theological systems which provide the support of reason and intelligibility to the spiritual experience of



the soul. *Samarasam*, thus, is the highest and most exalted spiritual state where the issues of whether ultimate Reality is one or many lose their meaning. In this highest experiential state, Vedānta and Siddhānta converge. In this unspeakable and silent state of *samarasam*, divergence, duality, discord and disputes are transcended and what is left is convergence, non-duality, concord and harmony of religions, because this is "the common path of silence wherein the truth of all religions merge" (TP IV.4).

A further important point concurrent with the above is the practical turn Tāyumānavar gives to *samarasam*, the essence of Vedānta and Siddhānta. This is brought out in the singular expression "*camaraca nirvākanilai*" (the operational aspect of *samarasam*). The practical dimension of mystical experience has great significance. It is this insight of the poet-saint that makes him still relevant centuries later. The *samarasa*-mind which he speaks about is wider in its spiritual outlook, is open to include others, and is ready to meet and dialogue with other traditions. *Samarasam*, in this sense is a cohesive force emanating from the heart and spirit of religion itself, from religious experience (*anubhava*). One may say that 'experience' is the basis of the meeting of religions and even all humanitarian endeavours that accompany it. Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam*, understood thus, can be viewed as providing a potential insight into the religious pluralism of any age. In the wider horizon of unity experience, religious traditions may be seen as co-existing for mutual growth and enrichment. Nothing seems more natural than that they meet and participate in that harmonious and tranquil context of spiritual experience.

A final point of this analysis is Tāyumānavar's understanding of Vedānta and Siddhānta. There are a variety of ways in which the concept of Vedānta is used. The poet-saint's understanding of Advaita Vedānta as love-union and social force is different from the understanding of scholastic Advaita. By defining this love-union in the Viśiṣṭādvaita language of '*sāyūjyā*' he clearly shows that he does not understand Advaita experience, otherwise called *samarasam*, as identical with the non-dualism of scholastic Vedānta. Vedānta and Siddhānta are understood as the experiential state of the human soul. In this sense, *samarasam* is as close to the non-dualism (Advaita) of Vedānta as it is to the

dualism (*ōtariyatuvitam* = dualism that defies scrutiny) of Siddhānta; in fact, it is above both. *Advaitānubhava* is the common ground of religious experience for both Vedānta and Siddhānta. In this sense, the poet-saint is a non-conformist Vedāntin and also a non-conformist Siddhāntin in an original and creative manner. In both respects he did not merely follow the line of the *Śāstras* (scholastic Vedānta and Siddhānta), but re-interpreted them according to the criterion of his own intuitive experience. So in the quest for *samarasam* Tāyumānavar is not really trying to combine or synthesize the two systems, but seeks the common experiential roots in religion as such.

The basis of Tāyumānavar's vision of Śaiva Siddhānta and Vedānta in terms of a mutual encompassing encounter needs to be underscored. It is not the scholastic method of containment through refutation. It is found in the mystical experience of Śiva) *Śivānubhava*). By making use of the concept of Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam*, the poet-saint unfolded the potentially ecumenical and inclusive elements that are present in the two traditions themselves but are often obscured by theological rancor and polemical zeal. I describe this as an ecumenical approach in the sense that it provides a common meeting place and includes the various traditions within the 'household' of Hinduism. The word ecumenism has usually been used to refer to an attempt to recapture the sense of oneness among the Christian Churches. The terms 'ecumenism' and 'ecumenical', in this study of Tāyumānavar, are intentionally extended to mean the spirit of openness which potentially also provides for inclusiveness between religions. In seeking to reconcile Vedānta and Siddhānta, the poet-saint seems to have focused his eye on the potentially all-embracing and inclusive elements present in the heart of all religions.

*Samarasam* follows most naturally from his understanding of the two traditions of Vedānta and Siddhānta. Thus, his hymns are a call to the exponents of the traditions to return to the ground of experience which is an experience of non-otherness. In the heart of such experience, there is no place for distance or division between oneself and the other. Tāyumānavar's attempt to show the common ground of the two traditions, and his appeal to the followers to focus on the essential and

central message rather than on what is merely of the nature of 'cumulative' to their traditions, is the core of Vedānta Siddhānta *samarasam*. Experiencing the essence of religious traditions as also integral to one another is *samarasam*. *Samarasam* understood as *advaitānubhava* (unity experience) at least provides a vision of unlimited possibility and endless endeavour. The experiential realization of oneness between God and the soul, and between religious traditions, is a possibility more or less distinctly envisaged by all religious traditions and therefore deserves to be further explored. It that sense Tāyumanavar's call is relevant even today, for in a religiously pluralistic society, the meeting of religions at the point of realization of their essence can certainly create room for a constructive and spiritually meaningful co-existence.



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 the necessary funds to carry out its  
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## GENERAL INDEX

- Abheda, 132  
 Ācārya, 26  
 Achyuta Raya, 17  
 Acit, 123  
 Adhvas, 58  
 Advaita, 32, 52, 67, 77, 79, 80, 82, 85-6, 87, 94, 95, 96-9, 101, 122, 130, 132, 153, 157, 158, 164, 171  
 Advaita jñāna, 98  
 Advaita vāñcai, 97  
 Advaita Vedānta, 26, 32, 33, 83, 171  
 Advaita Religion, 169  
 Advaitamukti, 9  
 Advaitānandam, 103, 147  
 Advaitānubhava, 33, 67, 81, 82, 85, 104, 106, 157, 166, 169, 172, 173  
 Advaitic ṛṣi, 78-9  
 Āgama, 6, 29-30, 42, 49, 97, 109-12, 113-16, 117, 120, 121, 135-37, 146-47, 169  
 Āgāmi, 126  
 Āgāmiyam, 55-6  
 Āgantuka, 125  
 Aghora Siva, 110  
 Agnikārya, 116  
 Ahaṁ, 153  
 Ahaṁ brahmāsmi, 158  
 Ahaṁbrahmavādins, 27  
 Ahaṁkāra, 70  
 Ahmadnagar, 18  
 Akiyavādins, 27  
 Ajitāgama, 117-18  
 Ajñāna, 83  
 Akam, 38, 78  
 Akaval, 38, 40  
 Akilamāyai, 57  
 Akilāṇṭanāyaki, 37, 38, 46, 63  
 Akkuvai, 35  
 Akōcara, 101-02  
 Akṣayalinga Desikar, 2  
 Ālvārs, 26, 80, 85  
 Ambalavana Desikar, 2  
 Ānanda, 43, 83, 140, 145  
 Āṇṭakkaḷippu, 38, 67, 69  
 Anaya, 32-33  
 Āṇava, 49, 52, 53, 70, 93, 125, 127, 129-30, 136, 164  
 Āṇava mala, 60, 119, 125, 127, 128, 129, 159-60  
 Ankuṣam, 100  
 Anniyur, 80  
 Anpu, 32, 78, 80, 123  
 Antaḥ, 76, 77, 87  
 Antaḥkaraṇas, 59  
 Anthropomorphic, 50  
 Anubhava, 27, 28, 41, 80, 106, 109, 123, 136, 143, 157, 162, 169, 171  
 Anubhūti, 141  
 Anugraha, 124  
 Anugraha śakti, 119  
 Anupakṣa, 30  
 Aparabrahman, 77  
 Aparōkṣa jñāna, 83  
 Aparōkṣānubhūti, 76  
 Apauruṣeya, 75  
 Appar, 39  
 Appaya Dikshitar, 24  
 Artha, 29  
 Aruḷ, 32, 45, 46-7, 86, 124, 161, 163-64  
 Aruḷ tārakam, 46  
 Aruḷ punai, 47  
 Arulayya Pillai, 1, 6, 10  
 Aruḷ guru, 49  
 Arulnanti Sivacariyar, 7, 82, 112, 133  
 Arunachalem, 37  
 Arunakirinatar, 31, 39, 137  
 Arūpa, 128  
 Arūpi, 123  
 Asat, 58  
 Asceticism, 79  
 Aśiva, 119  
 Aṣṭaprakaraṇa, 110  
 Ātman, 119, 137  
 Āvaraṇa, 83  
 Avasthā, 59, 145  
 Avirodhādhyāya, 28  
 Being, 77, 118, 158  
 Beyondness, 161  
 Bhakta, 80  
 Bhaktānubhava, 155  
 Bhakti, 32, 80, 82  
 Bhaktirūpānām jñānam, 76  
 Bheda, 131-32  
 Bhedābheda, 109, 131, 132  
 Bhōga, 127  
 Bhōgi, 123  
 Bhuvana, 127  
 Bijapur, 18, 19, 20  
 Bindu, 43, 94  
 Bliss, 43, 47, 61-2, 71, 77, 158  
 Blissful state, 62, 123, 161  
 Bōdham, 217  
 Bondage, 58, 61, 65, 69-70  
 Boundless, 55  
 Brahma Sūtra, 28, 76, 77, 85

Brahmā, 52, 143, 153  
 Brahman, 52, 77, 83, 117, 132  
 Brahmāsmi, 153  
 Brahmadevī, 86  
 Brhadāraṇyakōpaniṣadbhāṣya, 83  
 Buddhi, 69  
 Buddhism, 22

Cācuvata muttinilai, 66  
 Cācuvata puṭkala, 95  
 Cakratara pākya, 63  
 Caldwell, R., 20  
 Caṅkarpa Nirākaraṇam, 26  
 Cāramāmuniyar matha, 1, 8  
 Caryā, 30, 61, 62, 64, 70, 80, 97, 116,  
 117, 120, 121, 130  
 Caturtham, 125  
 Centamilcelvi, 2  
 Chandramaṇḍala, 63  
 Chidambaram, 24, 25  
 Chidambaram Pillai, 10  
 Cidampara Mudaliyar P. N., 3  
 Cinmayānantaguru, 42, 48, 49, 96,  
 139  
 Ciṇmudrā, 101, 136  
 Cirakiri, 48  
 Cit, 58, 60, 105, 123, 138, 145  
 Citta, 60, 69, 70  
 Citta mauni, 50  
 Cognition, 41  
 Cokkanatha Nāyak, 25  
 Coleroon, 17, 23  
 Consciousness, 43, 57, 59, 60, 63, 77,  
 119, 120, 125, 139, 143, 145  
 Convergence, 161, 162  
 Cosmic goddess, 63  
 Cummā, 69

Dakṣiṇāmūrti, 9, 48, 50, 144  
 Dāna, 65  
 Darśana, 76, 166  
 Das Gupta, 115  
 Daśaman, 82  
 De Nobili, 21  
 Deity, 124  
 Detachment, 92  
 Devotee, 61, 96  
 Devotion, 61, 62, 67  
 Dharma, 29, 65, 120, 131  
 Dharmapuram Ādhiṇam, 1, 2, 4  
 Dikṣā, 9, 61, 110, 120  
 Dikṣāguru, 50  
 Divine, 94  
   divine experience, 67  
   divine act, 61  
   divine hall, 167  
 Dualism, 170  
 Dualistic, 77, 110  
 Duhkhanivṛti, 83

Dvaita jñānam, 98  
 Dvaitam, 98-9

Eclecticism, 155-56  
 Ecumenism, 172  
 Egoism, 100  
 Eight Manuals, 110  
 Ekam, 132  
 Ekkālakkanni, 69  
 Eṅkumniraikina poruḷ, 97  
 Enlightenment, 41, 61  
 Ennaittānakkal, 32, 163  
 Epics, 6  
 Epigraphica Indica, 17  
 Eśumatānirākaraṇam, 25  
 Eṭṭuttokai, 78

Finite, 42, 52  
 Fire-rites, 62  
 Formlessness, 42  
 Fructification, 55, 56

Gandharvas, 143  
 Garuḍa, 25  
 Gingi, 17, 18, 19  
 Gītā, 84  
 Gītānjali, 6  
 Gnosis, 29, 76  
 God-experience, 39, 71  
 God-guru, 48, 49  
 God-realization, 64, 65  
 Golconda, 17, 18, 19, 20  
 Gotra, 155  
 Govinda Raja, 25  
 Grace, 41, 47, 55, 97  
 Gṛhastha, 9  
 Guṇas, 58, 60  
 Guru, 9, 48, 61, 83, 130, 146, 163

Hara, 29

Ichā, 128  
 Iconoclasts, 156  
 Idam sāstram, 111  
 Immanence, 43  
 Immutable, 54  
 Impurities, 57, 61  
 Indra, 143  
 Indrajālam, 70, 90, 91  
 Indriya, 57, 59  
 Indweller, 47  
 Infinite, 77, 122  
 Intuitive knowledge, 66, 158  
 Inpanilai, 62  
 Inpaniṣṭa, 71  
 Integration, 41, 125  
 Intelligence, 41, 77, 118  
 Interiority, 78  
 Intuitive experience, 71, 172



- Iranṭarṭa poruḷ, 95  
 Iruḷ malam, 125  
 Iruṭavirupatu, 133  
 Iruvinai, 54  
 Iruviṇaioppu, 154  
 Isaac Tambyah, 155  
 Islam, 21, 22, 25  
 Iśvara, 77  
 Itihāsa, 97  
  
 Jāgra, 59  
 Jainism, 22  
 Jambutirṭham, 23  
 Jivanmukta, 11  
 Jñāna mārga, 64, 65, 70  
 Jñāna, 9, 29, 49, 60, 61, 62, 64, 65, 70, 78, 80, 82-83  
 Jñāna guru, 82  
 Jñānamukti, 110  
 Jñānapāda, 65, 110, 116, 117, 119-21  
 Jñāpti, 76  
  
 Kaivalya Navanītam, 82, 85  
 Kalai-jñānam, 124  
 Kālidāsa, 154  
 Kāmikāgama, 113  
 Kanakaṣapapati, 1, 2, 11  
 Kaṇṇiś, 38, 39  
 Karma, 56, 66, 122, 123, 125, 130, 136  
 Karma Mala, 125, 126, 127, 129-30, 142  
 Karuṇai, 46  
 Karuṇākarakkaṭavuḷ, 46, 87  
 Kāṭikatai, 70  
 Kavery, 6, 17  
 Kaviraj, 8  
 Kāya mauna, 50  
 Ketiliyappa Pillai, 3, 6  
 Kevala, 129, 133  
 Kevalāvasthā, 60  
 Kiñcit-jñāna, 119  
 Kinnaras, 143  
 Koiyulur Adhinam, 84  
 Koṭṭikkaraññānikaḷ, 1, 2, 4-6  
 Krimikantha, 24  
 Krishnadeva Raya, 17  
 Krishnappa Nāyak, 25  
 Kriyā, 61, 64, 70, 80, 97, 110, 116, 117, 120, 128, 130  
 Kriyāpāda, 118  
 Kulottunga I, 24  
 Kulottunga II, 24  
 Kumaragurupara, 25  
 Kumbakonam, 24-5  
 Kuṇḍalini, 63  
 Kūrattāḷvan, 24  
  
 Liberation, 58, 60, 61, 65, 66  
 Lokāyata, 91, 92  
 Lōpa, 92  
  
 Madras, 3, 19  
 Madura, 17, 18, 19-20  
 Maduraikkalambakam, 25  
 Mahā Rāmāyaṇa, 83  
 Mahalinga Tambiran, 1  
 Mahāvākyas, 98, 153, 158  
 Maheswara, 118  
 Makuṭam, 114  
 Mala, 61, 65, 70, 119, 126-27, 132, 164  
 Malaivaḷarkātali, 46, 87  
 Malaparipākam, 65, 146  
 Malāvṛta, 119  
 Manas, 119  
 Maṇi mantra, 65  
 Mānikkavācakar, 7, 31, 39, 81, 112, 114  
 Maṇṭalattin, 103  
 Maṇṭapa, 23  
 Mantra draṣṭārāh, 75  
 Mantraguru, 49  
 Mantras, 91, 92, 101, 120, 162  
 Maraijñāna Sāmbanda Deśikar, 7  
 Marapiyal, 2, 5  
 Mārga, 49, 61, 64, 84  
 Mārkaṇḍeya, 142, 143  
 Maṭamai, 142  
 Maṭha, 1-2, 4, 5, 25, 84, 86  
 Maunaguruvaṇakkam, 8  
 Mauna, 91, 92, 101, 139-41  
 Maunaguru maṭha, 1, 11  
 Maunaguru darśanam, 9  
 Maunaguru, 1, 4, 5, 8, 11, 49, 146-47  
 Maunaguru vaṇakkam, 31, 48  
 Mauna samarasam, 170  
 Maunattambiran, 2  
 Mauni, 69  
 Maunōpateśaguru, 49  
 Māyā, 30, 48, 52, 56-7, 70, 90, 91, 100, 118-19, 122, 125, 126-28, 129-30, 136, 164  
 Māyā Mala, 119, 126, 127, 130, 142  
 Māyāvādins, 27  
 Meykaṇṭār, 39, 82, 110, 111, 114, 121, 122, 126, 131  
 Meyyūṇartal, 79  
 Mithyā, 106, 133  
 Mokṣa, 29, 49, 64, 71, 119, 129, 130, 139, 142, 147  
 Mōṇa samarasam, 161, 162  
 Mōṇam, 141, 161, 162  
 Mount Sira, 48  
 Mount Meru, 52  
 Mṛgendrāgama, 117, 118-20  
 Mukamelām, 37

- Mukhya neri, 163  
 Mukti, 10, 26, 39, 43, 46, 53, 56, 60,  
     64, 68, 71, 80, 81, 93, 96, 110, 125,  
     139-40, 142, 145, 146, 147, 158  
 Mūladharam, 60  
 Mūlar, 91, 92, 101, 162  
 Mūrthi, 94  
 Mutal nūl, 112, 121  
 Muthu Veerappa, 4, 5  
 Muthu Vijaya Raghunatha Chokka-  
     linga, 3  
 Muthukrishnappa Nāyakar, 4, 6  
 Muthuveerappa Nāyakar, 4, 5, 7  
 Muttiah Pillai, 155  
 Muttu Krishnappa, 22  
 Mystic, 66, 68  
 Mysticism, 40  
  
 Nādam, 43, 87-8  
 Nādis, 65  
 Nāgarī, 114  
 Nallaswami Pillai, 154  
 Nallur, 10  
 Nalvīnai, 55  
 Nāna neri, 163  
 Nāna tinākaran, 70  
 Nānakkanal, 65, 70  
 Nānākni, 65  
 Nānamattakagam, 100  
 Nānapakavān, 102  
 Nānavaival, 70  
 Natarāja, 24  
 Nāyanmārs, 28, 85  
 Nellore, 17  
 Nelson J. H., 17, 20  
 Neti, 77, 105  
 Nilai, 159  
 Nimitta, 122  
 Niraicūnyam, 89  
 Nirāmaya, 44, 96, 102  
 Nirāmaykkaṇṇi, 69  
 Nirañcana, 96, 102  
 Nirguṇa, 66, 77  
 Nirkūṇa, 44, 102  
 Nirmala, 65  
 Nirvāṇa dikṣā, 11, 61  
 Nirvacana, 102  
 Nirvikalpa śamādhi, 66  
 Nirviṣaya, 44-5, 95, 102  
 Nirvṛti, 101  
 Niṣkala, 102  
 Niṣprapañca, 96  
 Niṣtha, 143  
 Nitta nirmala, 95  
 Niṭṭai, 137  
 Non-dual, 40-1, 102, 131  
 Non-dualism, 170, 171  
 Non-duality, 65, 171  
  
 Omnipresent, 45, 161  
 Oneness, 120, 165  
 Orthodoxy, 75, 109  
 Orucol mārkkaṁ, 65  
 Ōtariyatuvitam, 97-8, 169  
 Ramanathapillai P., 4  
  
 Padārthas, 110  
 Pādas, 116, 117, 121  
 Padmarekha, 7  
 Padmāsana, 9  
 Painkiliikkaṇṇi, 38  
 Pakṣirāja, 25  
 Pālaiyagars, 17  
 Poligars, 17  
 Palmyra, 2  
 Pañcakrtyas, 124  
 Pañcākṣara, 65  
 Panniru Tirumuṛai, 80  
 Pāpa, 54  
 Parabrahman, 77  
 Parāparakkaṇṇi, 37  
 Parama śivam, 158  
 Paramākāśa, 103  
 Paramānupūti, 144  
 Paramātma, 118  
 Parapakkam, 28  
 Paraparam, 88  
 Parāśakti, 115  
 Paraśivavaṇakkam, 40  
 Parāvāk, 113  
 Parāvidyā, 29, 75  
 Parimelaḷakar, 79  
 Paripāṭal, 78  
 Parōkṣa jñāna, 83  
 Pāśa, 9, 49, 69, 70, 100, 109, 115, 117,  
     119, 121-22, 124-25, 126, 128, 130,  
     136, 155, 162-63  
 Pāśa Irul, 53  
 Pati, 7, 9, 29, 109, 115, 117, 120, 121,  
     122, 124, 125, 129, 136, 155, 160  
 Pattinattar, 39  
 Pēranantam, 44  
 Perception, 57, 158  
 Periya Tirumōji, 81  
 Periyānāyaki, 38, 46  
 Phenomenal, 123  
 Philosopher, 66  
 Polarizing, 162  
 Polemical, 172  
 Poligars, 17  
 Pondicherry, 114  
 Poovai Kalyanasundara Mudaliyar, 3  
 Porul, 78  
 Prabandhas, 26  
 Prajñānam, 153  
 Prakṛti, 98, 114  
 Praḷayakalās, 129, 130  
 Pramāṇas, 30

- Prāṇa, 60  
 Prāṇava, 140  
 Prāṇāyāma, 62  
 Prapanāmṛtam, 24  
 Prārabdham, 56, 126  
 Pravacana, 26  
 Primordial matter, 56, 118  
 Pudukoṭṭai, 10  
 Pundit, 6  
 Puṇya, 54  
 Purāṇas, 6, 51, 103, 121  
 Purāṇic, 39, 51, 52  
 Pure divine consciousness, 60  
 Pure spirit, 58  
 Pure self, 159  
 Puruṣa, 59, 60, 98  
 Puvai Kaliyanasundara Mudaliar, 38  
 Queen Meenaksi, 4, 5  
 Rameswaram, 10  
 Raghunath Nāyak, 19  
 Rājayoga, 63  
 Ramanatapuram, 2  
 Ramanna Sastri V. V., 113  
 Rāmānuja, 23, 24, 26, 76  
 Ranganatha, 23  
 Rasa, 153  
 Rauravāgama, 116, 120  
 Ritualists, 110  
 Rituals, 156, 157  
 Rsis, 75, 106  
 Rūpi, 123  
 Śabda, 59  
 Saccitānantaguru, 49  
 Sadāśiva Desikar, 2  
 Sadasiva Pillai, 3  
 Sadāsiva, 117  
 Sādhaka, 85, 120  
 Sādhanas, 30, 65, 80, 83, 85, 98, 99  
 Saṅga, 66  
 Sahaja, 125  
 Sahasrava, 63  
 Saiva Siddhānta, 7, 26, 28, 31-2, 57, 66, 82, 109-10, 111, 113, 114, 120, 121-22, 124, 129, 131, 132, 134, 136, 142, 146, 154-5, 159, 160, 164, 169  
 Śaivāgamās, 31, 61, 113  
 Śaivamaṭhas, 2  
 Śaivism, 23, 25, 82, 111, 140  
 Sakala, 129-30  
 Sakalāvasthā, 60  
 Śākṣātkāra, 102  
 Śakti, 41, 46, 118, 120, 122, 130, 154  
 Śaktinipāta, 120  
 Salem, 17  
 Śalivāhana, 2-3  
 Samadarśanam, 154  
 Samādhi, 2-3, 116  
 Samadr̥ṣṭi, 154  
 Samarāṣa Jñāniyar, 18, 155  
 Samarasam, 49, 75, 134, 139, 140, 142, 153, 154-56, 158-61, 172  
 Samaya dikṣā, 61  
 Samayācāryas, 137, 163  
 Sambandha Mudaliyar, 3  
 Sambandhar, 80, 112  
 Śambu, 102  
 Samhāra, 124  
 Sāṅkhya, 98  
 Sampradāya, 130  
 Śāmpupakṣa, 30  
 Sañcita, 126  
 Sañcitam, 55, 56  
 Saṅgam, 38, 78  
 Śankara, 76, 77, 83, 84, 85, 102, 106, 133  
 Sanmārga, 64, 78  
 Sannyāsa, 84, 86  
 Sanskrit, 26, 114  
 Santānācāryas, 7, 163  
 Sapapati Desikar, 2  
 Śārba nūl, 121  
 Sarvottara, 118  
 Śāstra, 7, 30, 42, 80, 82, 83, 110, 136, 172  
 Sat, 58-9, 64, 129  
 Sat-asat, 129  
 Satguru, 49  
 Sathyanatha Aiyar R., 22  
 Satkāryavāda, 122  
 Sāyūjya, 171  
 Scholastic Vedānta, 171-72  
 Sectarianism, 41  
 Serpent-like buddhi, 70  
 Sewell, R., 5  
 Shanmugam Pillai, 135  
 Siddhānta, 26, 31, 32, 37, 49, 68, 71, 79, 84, 91, 92, 94, 109, 110, 111  
 Siddhānta muttimutal, 66  
 Siddhānta Śāstras, 7, 109  
 Siddhars, 10, 31, 92-3, 142, 156-57  
 Siddhi, 9, 63, 65, 68, 79, 93, 156  
 Śiragiri, 45  
 Śiṣya, 83  
 Śiva pūja, 116  
 Śiva, 9, 10, 11, 23, 24, 27, 51-2, 64, 102, 115, 116, 123, 130, 135-36, 139, 141, 154  
 Śiva-ñāna, 131  
 Śivabhōgam, 27, 146, 153  
 Śivācārya, 131  
 Sivacidambara Pillai, 6  
 Śivajñāna, 49



- Śivam, 124, 130-31, 157  
 Śivamayam, 66  
 Śivañānapōtam, 7, 110  
 Śivānubhava, 27, 74, 169, 172  
 Śivānubhūti, 49, 142, 155, 162  
 Śivānupūti, 139, 141, 143, 160  
 Śivapōkam, 147  
 Śivappirakāśam, 122, 125, 146  
 Śivaprakāśa, 25, 139  
 Śivasāyūjyamutti, 66  
 Śivasāyūjya, 64  
 Śivat parataram nasti, 23, 24  
 Śivatvam, 130  
 Śivayōga, 131  
 Śivayōgin, 10  
 Śivohambhāvana, 65  
 Smṛtis, 121  
 Soma Sundara Desikar, 2  
 Somaśambhu, 110  
 Sōpanam, 153  
 Soul, 44, 53-60, 64, 65, 66, 70, 101,  
 117-21, 124-25, 126-28, 130-31,  
 132-33, 137, 141  
 Sourirajan, 1, 39  
 Sri Ramakrishna Tapōvanam, 4  
 Śrībhāṣya Pravacana, 26  
 Śrinivāsa Desikar, 25  
 Sriranga III, 18  
 Sriranga II, 18  
 Srīraṅgam, 23, 25, 81  
 Srṣṭi, 124  
 Śruti, 75, 121, 154  
 Sthala-purāṇas, 5  
 Sthānu, 118  
 Stōtra, 28  
 Subramaniya Pillai, K., 4, 10, 147,  
 161  
 Śuddha, 133  
 Śuddha māyā, 129  
 Śuddha śivam, 99  
 Śuddhādvaīta, 111, 114, 121, 130,  
 131, 132, 133-34  
 Śuddhāvasthā, 60  
 Sukar, 143  
 Sundarar, 7, 39, 112, 115  
 Tēvāram, 157  
 Supakkam, 123  
 Suprabhēdāgama, 111, 116  
 Suśupti, 59  
 Sūtra, 130  
 Svapna, 59  
 Svarūpa, 101-02  
 Svarūpa-lakṣaṇa, 123  
 Tarparam, 79  
 Tādātmya, 133  
 Taittirīya Upaniṣad, 77  
 Tājikota, 17, 18  
 Tamil Lexicon, 153  
 Tamil Tāy, 69  
 Tamil Nādu, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 28,  
 39  
 Tamil Saṅgam, 32  
 Tamil, 26, 28, 30, 32, 85-6  
 Tandavaraya Swami, 82  
 Tanjore, 17, 18, 19-20  
 Tantra, 91, 92, 162  
 Tantraguru, 49  
 Tantrāvatāra, 113  
 Tanu, 127  
 Tapas, 65, 75, 130  
 Tat, 153  
 Tatacharya, 24  
 Taṭastha-lakṣaṇa, 122-23  
 Tattuva corūpam, 95  
 Tattva vilakkam, 83  
 Tattvas, 59, 60, 65, 66, 104, 120, 161  
 Tāyumānavar, 1-2, 3-6, 7-11, 17,  
 18-23, 26-7, 29, 31-3, 37-8, 41, 43,  
 45, 49, 50-2, 55, 56, 59, 62-3, 64,  
 65-71, 75, 77-8, 82, 86, 88, 89, 90,  
 91-2, 93-5, 98, 99, 101, 102, 103,  
 105, 106, 109, 121, 134-35, 136, 137,  
 139, 140, 142, 144-47, 153, 155-57,  
 161-63, 164, 165, 166-69, 170-73  
 Tāyumānavar Pāṭal Meykaṇṭa  
 Vṛttiurai, 3  
 Tēciya Kīṭaṅkal, 69  
 Teṅgalais, 26  
 Tēnmukam, 66  
 Tēvāram, 68, 112, 114, 157  
 Tirōbhāva, 124  
 Tiruarul, 164  
 Tiruchirappalli, 1, 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11,  
 19, 21, 43, 140, 145  
 Tiruchy malaikōyil, 2  
 Tirujñāna Sāmbandhar, 6  
 Tirukkōvaiyār, 82  
 Tirukkuṛaḷ, 78-9, 85  
 Tirumala Nāyak, 5, 18, 19, 21, 25  
 Tirumaṅgai Ālvar, 81  
 Tirumantiram, 32, 79, 80, 85, 86, 111,  
 114, 161  
 Tirumūlar, 30, 31, 39, 80, 86, 111,  
 114, 137, 157  
 Tirumurai, 109, 112, 114  
 Tiruñāna Cāmpantar, 6  
 Tirunāvukkaracu, 6  
 Tiruvācakam, 81, 112, 115  
 Tiruvaḷḷuvar, 78, 86  
 Tiruvānikka, 63  
 Tiruviruṭṭam, 81  
 Tōlkāppiyam, 78  
 Topur, 18  
 Transcendence, 42, 44, 69  
 Transmigration, 139  
 Tripadārtha, 109, 122  
 Turiya, 60

- Turiyatīta, 59, 60  
 Turiyavasthā, 60  
 Ultimate union, 158  
 Umapati, 7, 26, 39, 82, 114, 124, 128  
 Unity-experience, 110  
 Upacāntam, 89  
 Upadeśa, 10, 83  
 Upadeśa guru, 50  
 Upadeśasāhasrī, 83  
 Upaniṣads, 31, 37, 75-77, 84, 106, 110, 169  
 Upāsana, 136  
 Uruvām, 123  
 Uruvāruvām, 123  
 Uṭalpoyyuravu, 38  
  
 Vacana, 59  
 Vadagalais, 25  
 Vaidika Śaivism, 134  
 Vaidyalinga Desikar, 2  
 Vaiṣṇava, 82  
 Vaiṣṇavism, 22, 24, 25, 26  
 Vajravelu Pillai, 3  
 Vāk, 119  
 Vaḷi nūl, 121  
 Vaḷviṇai, 128  
 Vaṇṇam, 38, 40  
 Vasiṣṭha Rāmāyana, 84  
 Vasiṣṭha, 84  
 Vaṭapal Mauni, 50  
 Veda Sāram, 111  
 Vedāṅgas, 80  
 Vedānta, 22, 26, 31, 66, 71, 75, 77, 79, 80, 83, 85, 86-91, 99, 103, 106, 110, 111, 112, 138, 142, 143, 145, 146, 153, 155, 158, 160-61, 167, 169, 170, 171-72  
 Vedānta Sūtra, 26  
 Vedānta Vijñāna, 75  
 Vedānta Jñāna, 89  
  
 Vedānta Marapu, 90  
 Vedas, 6, 29, 39, 42, 47, 49, 63, 76, 85, 87-8, 89, 97, 104-05, 109-13, 114, 118, 121, 134-37, 139, 140, 143, 146-47, 169  
 Vedic Canon, 75  
 Veeralimalai, 10  
 Veḷḷala, 10  
 Venkatapati, 24  
 Veṭāranyam, 6, 11  
 Vibhu, 128  
 Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha, 4, 5  
 Vijayanagar, 9, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24  
 Vijayarakaunata Chokkalinga, 4  
 Vijayindra Tirtha, 24  
 Vijñānakalas, 129  
 Viśeṣa dikṣā, 61  
 Viśiṣṭādvaita, 171  
 Viṣṇu, 24, 25  
 Viṣwanatha Nayak, 17  
 Vyakhyāna, 111  
 Vyomanilai, 95  
 Vyomaparipūraṇa, 44, 102  
  
 Winslow, 153  
  
 Yachama Nāyaka, 18  
 Yama, 52  
 Yāppu, 38  
 Yoga mārga, 61  
 Yogāsana, 62  
 Yogavāsitta, 82  
 Yoga, 30, 61, 62-63, 64, 79-80, 91, 92, 117, 120, 130, 142, 157, 162  
 Yogapāda, 116  
 Yogi, 62-3, 70, 84, 123  
  
 Zvelebil K., 30, 78













Of related interest:

## THE ORIGINS OF VĪRĀŚAIVA SECTS

*R. Blake Michael*

The present work is probably the most thorough exploration of Vīrāśaivism available in any language except Kannaḍa. Already, the activities of founder/reformer Basava are well known throughout India and the world. Similarly, certain reformational aspects of Vīrāśaivism have attracted the attention of Western scholarship.

Professor Michael's book, however, goes beyond all previous efforts in non-Kannaḍa languages. It explores a crucial text, the Śūnyaśaṃpāḍane, from Vīrāśaivism's third century of development. There it finds sources for the seldom explored variety of forms and practices which characterize contemporary Vīrāśaiva sectarian and denominational patterns.

Non-Vīrāśaivas will finally have an opportunity to appreciate the richness and depth of this significant religious movement. Vīrāśaivas themselves may acquire a new appreciation of their own tradition's breadth and sophistication. All will find the detailed scholarship impressive and informative.

## REVOLUTION OF THE MYSTICS

On the Social Aspects of Vīrāśaivism

*J.P. Schouten*

One of the most fascinating episodes in the religious history of Southern India is the rise of the Vīrāśaiva movement. The movement arose in the twelfth century under the charismatic leadership of Basava. Men and women from every background joined the experimental community of the Vīrāśaivas. They had their own sacred literature in the form of short poems in Kannaḍa. This literature reveals the far-reaching social ideals of these devotees. They propagated the spiritual value of every kind of labour, connected with a strong emphasis upon social service. Especially in the domain of gender relations. Women and men are regarded as equal; and, consequently, women played an important role in the movement.

This study depicts the social views of the twelfth century reformers on the basis of their own texts. But also later developments are taken into consideration. Fifteenth century scriptures and ethnographical data from the colonial period give an impression of the reinterpretation of the old ideals and the consolidation of the community within the Hindu culture. The modern period is described with the help of anthropological research and the views of present-day Vīrāśaiva leaders. Four themes are thus discussed: caste; work and property; position of women; and education.

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